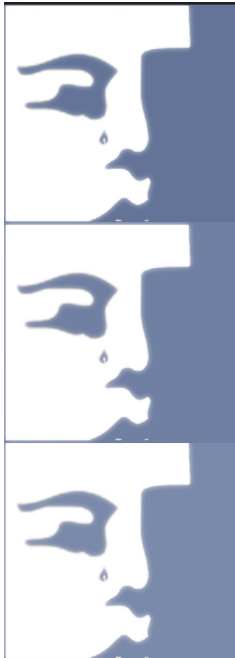


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# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCE GUIDE FOR FAITH LEADERS

OCTOBER 2001



MAG Regional

Domestic  
Violence  
Council



# IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

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(Note: Use this resource as a “Quick Reference Guide” in the event that a victim unexpectedly comes to you for assistance)

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## **Some things to remember:**

- Never counsel a victim and abuser together.
- Determine the level of the victim’s safety.
- Allow the victim to make the decisions.
- Keep all information confidential.

## **If the victim contacts you by phone:**

- Assess the safety of the victim and his/her children. If there is an immediate threat of violence call 9-1-1 immediately!
- Do not go to the scene of an incident in progress.
- If the abuse is over, ask the victim if the police have been called or if she/he would like you to contact police for them. Inquire about the need for medical assistance.
- If the abuser is not present or has been removed, encourage the victim to seek shelter from a trusted friend or family member or through a domestic violence shelter.

To get immediate assistance contact the National Domestic Violence hotline:

**1(800) 799-SAFE (7233)**

For local assistance call the shelter hotline:

**(602) 263-8900 or 1(800) 799-7739**

You can also utilize the resource section of this manual for all shelter programs in Arizona.

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## **How to respond to a victim:**

- Support the victim completely.
- Determine the level of the victim’s safety.
- Assist with getting the victim appropriate resources.
- Let the victim decide what is best for her/him and the children.

## **What you can say to the victim:**

- You are not alone.
- You are a brave person.
- I know it wasn’t easy to call me.
- I won’t tell anyone unless you want me to.
- Usually if he/she hit you once they will most likely do it again.
- I’m afraid for your safety.
- The congregation will support you if/when you are ready to leave.
- You don’t deserve to be abused.

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# INTRODUCTION

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Faith-based institutions are not immune to the destructive effects of domestic violence. National research has shown that one out of every 4 members of a congregation is a victim or survivor of domestic violence. Additionally, research has shown that victims are more likely to seek help from their church before turning to community resources. Many victims have reported that when they did turn to their religious leaders, they often were not understood or were given poor advice for dealing with their volatile situation.



The *MAG Domestic Violence Resource Guide for Faith Leaders* is an initiative of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Domestic Violence Council, and was created with the help of representatives from a variety of faith-based organizations. Faith communities are in a unique position to assist victims and their children by providing spiritual and emotional support, as well as resources, to help deal with the devastating effects of domestic violence.

It is recommended that this guide be utilized as a part of forming a comprehensive response in your religious institution to helping victims and their children to stay safe and to hold batterers accountable.

Many thanks go out to those individuals from the various faith communities and advocacy organizations who contributed to the information in this manual. Also, we would like to acknowledge the Philip Morris Doors of Hope Fund for providing the necessary financial support needed to develop this manual.

For more information on forming a comprehensive response in your faith organization, please feel free to contact Kristina Rivera at (602) 254-6300.

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## The Good Stranger

*By Esther Barnes, Adapted by Rev. Marie Fortune*

As a woman was traveling the road between romance and reality, she fell in love with the charming but insecure young man.

And it came to pass that after they were married, he beat her and robbed her of her dignity, and she ran from the house bruised and afraid, wishing she were dead.

A faith leader saw her swollen face and stopped to give some advice, "Wives, submit to your husbands," he read. And he excused himself to attend a seminar on Motivating Strong Leaders.

A doctor stopped and bandaged her face and gave her a prescription for Valium.

A women's group leader hearing her sobs felt a rush of pity. "I don't know what she sees in him," she thought and was thankful for her own gentle husband. And she went to buy the young woman a book on Making Your Marriage Work.

A police officer asked her if she needed help. She asked him to arrest her husband. The officer asked if there were any witnesses to the assault. Since there were none, he left her alone.

Another women's group president learned she was wandering the streets alone without a purse, her clothing torn, and said to the treasurer, "How awful! Poor dear!" And they agreed something should be done, and that they would bring it up at their next meeting.

A social worker noticed her and stopped to talk, "What did you do to provoke him?" she asked. The battered woman turned and walked away. The social worker concluded she did not want help.

And while the battered woman was wondering where she would sleep that night, a stranger greeted her and said, "Sister, come with me. We'll get some food at the crisis center and maybe some clothes." She took her threadbare coat and placed it on the woman's shoulders.

And when they found the Crisis Center had no empty beds, the stranger took the woman to her attic room, and cooked a macaroni dinner and canned peas on a hot plate. She made a pot of tea and listened to the incoherent bursts of pent-up pain. She wept to hear the broken dreams, self-doubt and shattered faith. And as the woman dropped to sleep upon the couch, the stranger breathed, "You're a survivor, like me," and made herself to lie upon the floor.

Which of these people was a neighbor to the woman who fell into the hands of the abuser?

The one who had compassion on her.

Go and do likewise. Go and do likewise.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OVERVIEW

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## Why and How Faith Communities Should Respond to Domestic Violence

Faith communities are not immune to the destructive forces of domestic violence. In fact, one of every four members of a congregation is a victim or a survivor of domestic violence (Rev. Marie Fortune, 1995). The responsibility to offer help and be a prophetic voice in the prevention of family violence is recognized by many religious institutions as fundamental to the values of justice, equality, and the protection of human dignity. To ensure the physical safety and spiritual well-being of their members, faith communities must be prepared to respond with knowledge and compassion.



The faith leader is often the one who is turned to in a time of crisis. Additionally, the faith community may be one of the few places the batterer does not control or restrict the victim's movements. Leaders of the faith communities also may be more accessible in terms of proximity and usually do not charge to see someone in need.

As a community of faith there are several practices that are helpful to all congregation members experiencing family violence.

### SUGGESTED PRACTICES INCLUDE:

#### Become a Safe Place

Make your congregation a safe haven where victims of domestic violence can come for help. Have brochures and posters in places where a victim can take the information with out fear of discovery. Telephone numbers should be included for the local shelters and national hotlines. Many times this information is best placed in restrooms.



#### Educate the Congregation

Members of the community of faith can learn about family violence through newsletter articles, in bulletins, and in seminars through adult education. Domestic violence should also be a topic of discussion in marriage preparation classes. One religious leader mentioned in the congregation newsletter that they would be out of the office participating in a workshop on domestic violence. Soon after, congregants were coming forward with requests for assistance related to family violence. The leader had opened the door to the congregation and let it be known the faith community was ready to provide assistance.

#### Speak Out

When appropriate, messages from the spiritual leaders should address family violence. This may be when a scriptural lesson is focused on a relevant topic such as suffering, victimization or during the month of October, Domestic



Violence Awareness Month. (See Appendix F for Sample Messages). Provide opportunities to make a difference. Encourage volunteers to assist shelters or other domestic violence agencies. Include information about opportunities to work with a coordinating council to develop and implement action plans.

### **Support Domestic Violence Shelters**

This can be an outreach with time, talent or dollars. The youth group can help with hands-on projects, such as holding a work day at the shelter or collecting items for shelter use. The adults of the congregation can provide additional support in donation of goods and services, or financially.

### **Make Your Community of Faith One that Protects Victims and Holds Offenders Accountable**

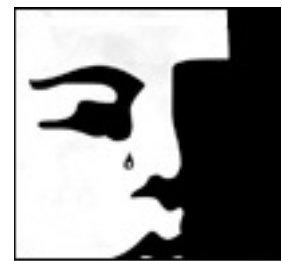
Make certain there are books available for battered women to read. A list for the library is provided in the Resource Appendix A. Make information available so a victim can take it and read it discreetly and then leave it behind if necessary.

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## Domestic Violence 101

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive control in an intimate relationship. This control may be seen in physical assault or in more subtle, but equally devastating ways. Verbal, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse, as well as isolation, also falls under the realm of abusive behaviors. Domestic violence crosses all racial, ethnic, economic, and religious communities.

Domestic violence is a crime that conservatively affects 25% of all American families. It is often a silent crime, hidden behind family doors. Most often domestic violence is an ongoing, debilitating experience of physical, psychological, and/or sexual abuse (American Medical Association definition). The Surgeon General of the United States reports that one out of five women battered by her partner has been victimized over and over by the same person.



ABOUT  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### PROFILE OF A VICTIM

Simply being female is the single greatest factor that increases one's risk of becoming a victim of domestic violence. Statistics show that in 95% of all domestic violence cases, women are the victims (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994). Gender is where the commonalities among victims ends. Victims are of every age, class, race, religious, geographic, sexual orientation, and personality group. In the United States, nearly one in three adult women experience at least one physical assault by a partner during adulthood (American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family 1996 Report).

### STATISTICS

- Every 9 seconds a woman is battered in the U.S.
- Only 1 out of every 10 victims of domestic violence report the incident.
- Annually, 1 out of every 10 elderly persons is victimized.
- Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women between the ages of 15 and 44.
- Domestic violence results in hundreds of millions of dollars in health care costs alone in the U.S., much of which is paid for by employer benefits.
- Between one and four million American women are abused by current or former husbands or boyfriends each year.
- Leaving an abusive partner increases, rather than decreases, the likelihood that the victim will be seriously assaulted or killed.

### MYTHS AND REALITIES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Domestic violence affects only a small percentage of the total population.

*According to national research, domestic violence occurs in approximately 28% of the population. It is estimated that 90 percent of all incidents are not reported. A survey by the United Methodist Church showed that one in*

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*thirteen members responding had been physically abused by a spouse and one in four had been verbally or emotionally abused.*

- Domestic violence only occurs in lower class or poorer families.

*Abusers and victims come from every race, religion, and socioeconomic background. Wealthier victims more often have access to assets so they do not require community resources. In addition, wealthier victims have more to lose in terms of status if the abuser is arrested.*



- Alcohol and/or drugs cause domestic violence.

*Alcohol and/or drugs may increase the frequency and severity but do not cause domestic violence.*

- Battering is just a momentary loss of temper and usually does not occur more than once.

*The U.S. Surgeon General reports that 1 out of every 5 women battered by her partner has been victimized repeatedly by that partner.*

- Leaving an abusive relationship is easy.

*The U.S. Department of Justice reports that the most dangerous time for a woman who is being battered is when she leaves.*

- Abuse is the result of an anger problem.

*Abuse is not caused by a problem with anger, it is an issue of power and control.*

## WHY VICTIMS STAY

Many victims of domestic violence do leave their abusive partners. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence estimates that on average, a victim returns to the abuser six times before finding the resources to finally break free from the relationship. Victims are faced with many barriers which prevent them from leaving. These barriers can include:

- **Fear of Increased Violence** — The lethality of the violence often increases when a batterer believes his/her partner is leaving the relationship. In fact, victims are most likely to be murdered when attempting to report abuse or leave the relationship. The batterer may have threatened to kill him/herself, the victim, the children, and/or friends and family if the victim attempts to leave. Immobilized with psychological and physical trauma, the victim often sees no way to protect herself.

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- **Frequency and Severity** — The violence may occur over a relatively short period or there may be a long period between battering incidents. The batterer may promise that the last act of violence will be the last.
  - **Lack of Financial Resources** — Batterers often control all access to the family resources. Without money or transportation the victim often has no place to turn. The majority of women on welfare are past victims of domestic violence, as are most homeless women. The victim may stay with the batterer to avoid the poverty she and her children will experience.
  - **Isolation** — The batterer may be the only emotional support left for the victim as a result of either voluntarily or being forced to cut off relationships with friends and family.
  - **Cultural Beliefs** — The victim may hold cultural or religious beliefs which support keeping the family together at all costs.
  - **Prior History of Abuse and Low Self-Esteem** — There may be a generational history of witnessing domestic violence in the family and/or of being abused. The victim may have learned to accept abuse as normal behavior because at an early age abuse was considered acceptable when someone had done something wrong. The victim may believe that the abuse is deserved and accepts responsibility for the batterer's behavior. Feelings of low-self worth and helplessness are continually reinforced by the batterer.

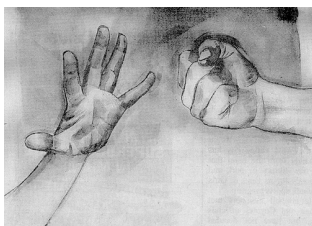


## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ALCOHOL/DRUG ABUSE

Although many studies show a high correlation of alcohol/drug abuse and domestic violence, there is no evidence that suggests a cause-and-effect relationship between the two. There are some characteristics that are shared. These would include:

- Intergenerational abuse
- Denial or minimization of the problem
- Isolation of the family

There are some findings that indicate that a battering incident coupled with alcohol/drug abuse may be more severe and result in greater injury. The batterer may state if the alcohol or drug abuse is treated, the battering problem will be treated as well. This is not the case and batterers' intervention counseling must be coupled with chemical dependency counseling. One cannot be substituted for the other.



It is possible that someone coming to seek assistance with alcohol use may be using alcohol to cope with violence in the family. If a batterer complains about the victim using too much alcohol or perhaps drugs, it may be a self-medicating attempt to deal with the pain. A batterer may use alcohol or drugs to ease the pain of low self-esteem or otherwise self-medicate.

Ann Ganley has created a distinction between hands-on and hands-off battering. Hands-on battering is physical or sexual abuse. This can include any attack on the person, from slaps and unwanted touching, to fractured bones and rape. The hands-off battering is a non-physical assault. This may be psychological abuse or forced activities such as cleaning the house during the middle of the night when the victim has to go to work the next morning. Additional hands-off abuse may control victims' activities such as where they go and with whom, or to attack victims' self-esteem or do things to intentionally frighten the victim such as reckless driving.

Although the hands-on battering is more likely to kill the victim, the hands-off abuse will require some type of treatment and take a great deal of time to heal.

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## Speaking to a Victim

Who is a victim of battering? Can you tell by looking? It is more than bruises, black eyes and broken bones. Battering is a pattern of coercive and controlling behavior, which is used to maintain power and control over the victim. Although the batterer may not have physically assaulted the victim, the terror and fear are still there.

It is very unlikely a victim will appear in your study one day and state, "I am being abused by my partner." There may be a suspicion that all is not well within the family. Most of the time, it will take a measure of gentle probing to elicit information.

### INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIM

Injuries which are inconsistent with the explanation.  
Embarrassment or attempts to hide injuries.  
Quiet or frightened demeanor in partner's presence.  
Tense, jittery and deferential to partner.  
May complain of "nervous stomach" or "sleeplessness."  
Mention partner's temper.  
History of repeated injuries.  
Multiple injuries in stages of healing.  
History of depression, possible suicide attempts.  
Edginess, fearfulness, high anxiety.

Questioning a possible victim of domestic violence can be very difficult. It may take some time getting used to bridging the gap between being uncomfortable and reaching out to someone. We do not recommend that you ask, "Are you a victim of domestic violence?" This is not advisable because it leaves the definition open to self-interpretation. I may be a victim, but I do not fit the definition of a battered person in my own mind. We also do not advocate for asking questions that are too evasive, "So, how have you been?" Questions such as these are too broad and they are easy to skirt around the true issue.

Questions can be asked gently. The following list gives suggestions on questions that can be used to elicit information:

- "You seem upset. What is troubling you?"
- "What's it like for you at home?"
- "What happens when you and your partner disagree?"
- "Do you have to account for your time?"
- "Are you ever afraid of your partner?"

- 
- “I’m sorry this happened to you.”
  - “Does your partner push you around or hit you?”

When speaking with a domestic violence victim, the most important thing is to listen to the story fully and believe the victim. You may be the first person to hear the entire story. Support and care for victims and let them know someone is there for them.



A victim needs to be listened to and then supported. An appropriate comment is, “This is not the life you were intended to have.” Other things to say include, “It is not your fault” and “You don’t deserve to be abused.” The next step is to let the victim know they are not alone and help is available. The victim may not be aware of community resources that will offer assistance. These resources can range from support groups to shelters and transitional housing. Other resources may include financial support if the family qualifies, day care if needed, career planning and training, and a myriad of support services. It is important to let the victim know help is available and how to access it.

The first step is to assist the victim in assessing his or her safety. A safety plan has been included in Appendix B. It is also helpful at this point to offer the victim an opportunity to call a local shelter program, not necessarily to see if space is available but to speak to an advocate. These advocates are trained in safety planning and many other aspects of victim services and can be beneficial in assisting the victim when making decisions on how to proceed.

During all of this, it is vital to simply offer suggestions and support and allow the victim to make decisions. Victims are the experts about the relationship and will make the best decisions based upon their knowledge. If there are children involved, care must be taken to ensure their safety. If the victim decides to return to the abuser, it may be necessary to make a report to Child Protective Services.

It is important to tell the victim that you will be reporting the potential danger for the children and offer the option of making alternative arrangements for them. If there is any reason to believe the children have already been harmed, it is usually beneficial for the victim to file a report. This will demonstrate cooperation to the authorities. This may lead to an offer of support services for the victim and the children.

The primary goal of assisting a victim of domestic violence is to protect the victim from further abuse. With this in mind, the religious leader should remember to:

- Listen and believe.
- Assist the victim in assessing the danger.
- Make referrals to appropriate resources.

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## **LISTEN AND BELIEVE**

The victim is sharing a very personal and painful part of her or his life. It is important to take the time to let the victim tell the story without being interrupted or rushed. Do not add comments that belittle the experience such as “I can’t believe he did that” or “Are you sure he meant to hurt you?” These comments tend to make the victim feel further isolated. Appropriate comments such as “That must have been frightening” or “You certainly have been through a difficult time” can be useful in assisting the person in telling the story and validating the experience.



## **ASSIST IN ASSESSING THE DANGER**

A victim is the person who knows the most about the batterer and is best qualified to determine the potential danger of the situation. A lethality assessment will include consideration of the abuser’s access to weapons, and a history of violence in this and other relationships.

A lethality assessment is located in the resources section of this manual in Appendix C.

A safety plan is another important part of assisting a victim of family violence. This document will aid victims in developing a plan to ensure safety as well as the safety of their children. This may be something victims cannot take with them. It can be an opportunity to have someone sit down and think through the situation. This may be an excellent time to offer the victim an opportunity to call one of the shelters and speak with an advocate. It is important to assure the victim it is not necessary to be prepared to leave in order to speak to an advocate. The person at the shelter can assist with developing a safety plan and offer other resources as well.

It is vital to refrain from encouraging a victim to participate in couples counseling. This will place the victim in a difficult situation. Couples counseling is based on both partners having equal standing in the relationship. This does not occur when there is violence in the home. Couples counseling will allow the batterer to continue to control the victim, in front of a therapist. It is wise to remember that changing the behavior of the victim cannot change the actions of the batterer. It is not the victim’s responsibility to stop the violence; it is the responsibility of the batterer.

Victims of domestic violence do not fit into a pattern nor are they all alike. They do share some characteristics. Some of these include:

- May blame self for the violence.
- May exhibit low self-esteem (may be magnified by batterer’s confirmation that the victims is “worthless”).
- May minimize or deny the violence.

- 
- May be isolated from family, friends and other support systems.
  - May exhibit unpredictable behavior (because of batterer's unpredictable behavior).
  - May feel shame and guilt.
  - May characterize themselves as a traditionalist within the family.
  - May accept responsibility for the batterer's actions and believe the "punishment" is deserved.
  - May use sexual relations to establish intimacy.
  - May believe they can assist the batterer in changing his/her behavior.
  - May believe the batterer can be helped without outside intervention.

### **WHY DO VICTIMS STAY?**

Victims have many reasons to stay in an abusive relationship but the most common is the love that still remains for their partner. The goal for them is not to end the relationship, but to end the abuse. A victim finds it difficult to hold the batterer accountable for the behavior and excuses the behavior due to stresses at work or in the family. The victim may assume the responsibility for maintaining the peace in the home. At other times, victims believe they will be able to change their partner's behavior.

A victim may have been told many times by the batterer that if they don't stay together, the victim will be with no one. The definite implication is if the victim attempts to leave, the batterer will make certain the victim will not live to be with anyone else. The victim knows this threat is real and can be carried out. If the victim states that they are afraid to leave, they must be believed and extreme care must be taken to ensure the safety of the victim and any children.

Another very common reason for victims to stay is the belief that children need both parents in the home. It is often very difficult for a victim to believe the family can survive without the other parent economically or emotionally. Many times the victim has been told the family must stay together at all costs. All of this leads to a concerted effort to keep the relationship intact.

A community of faith is a place where a victim has the right to expect support and understanding. Victims have already suffered greatly within the relationship and may look to their faith community to be a source of healing.

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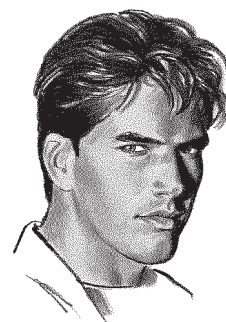
## The Offender in Your Congregation

### POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BATTERER

Jealous and possessive of partner.  
Intimidates partner in front of others.  
Discredits partner in front of others.  
Attempts to convince others partner is crazy.

Batterers are not all alike. They may, however, share some characteristics. A batterer:

- may have intense and dependent relationships with their partner.
- may abuse alcohol and drugs.
- may be traditionalists and believe in male supremacy and other gender stereotypes.
- may have experienced or witnessed violence in the family of origin.
- may have poor impulse control and limited tolerance for frustration.
- may have a criminal record.
- may have low self-esteem.
- may be extremely jealous and overprotective.
- may attempt to manipulate and/or control others and not believe their violent behavior should have negative consequences.
- may lack parenting skills.



Although the batterer may have some or all of these characteristics, they may not be evident to others.

It is vital to remember the batterer is in complete control; *not* out of control. The batterer uses physical force, or the threat of it, to remind the victim who is in control at all times.

There may be times a batterer will offer to attend marriage counseling with the partner for the sake of the marriage. Couples counseling is never appropriate when there is abuse in the home. This may be another attempt to control and manipulate the victim. The power and control the abuser exerts over the victim will be continued in the sessions. Couples counseling assumes there is equal power within the relationship. This places the victim in the position of needing to assist the batterer in obtaining help. A referral to an Offender Intervention Program is the most appropriate action that can be taken. (See Appendix A for a list of approved programs in the state of Arizona). The

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batterer can sign a release of information between the Offender Intervention Program and the religious leader to allow the faith leader to receive updates on the progress being made. A trained therapist can then assess when the batterer has progressed enough to start couples counseling if both batterer and victim are still interested.

When making a recommendation to an Offender Intervention Program, it is essential to offer support to the batterer while still holding them accountable for the abuse. The program will be holding the batterer accountable for the behavior. If the religious leader does not hold the batterer accountable, it will send mixed messages. Hope for change can still be offered. Carol Adams makes this statement, "I am on your side as you become a person who does not batter. I am against your battering behavior. I do not believe you should treat your wife as an object that can be battered. I am in total support of you as you seek to change." It is also important to talk about not using other types of abuse such as economic, emotional or financial.

There may be times when a batterer suddenly proclaims a "conversion" or a "coming to the Lord" and sees the error of his or her ways. They may indicate they need no further treatment. It is important the faith leader does not buy into this "quick fix." If this truly is a life altering conversion, then the batterer will be quick to see that the therapy is still necessary. If this is one more attempt to manipulate the victim and the system, it will eventually become evident.

It is important not to confront a potential batterer with anything the victim has told you. This could put the victim in greater danger. It is also important to not meet with the offender alone. The offender is likely to attempt to lure a faith leader into collusion against the victim. It is also possible that an irate batterer could injure a faith leader.

Batterers may have justifications in their own mind about why it is acceptable to abuse their partner. Here are samples of the comments that a batterer may make to justify abusive behavior:

- *"I don't want to hit, but I keep getting nagged and it seems like she (or he) wants to be hit."* (Note the use of a pronoun and objectification of the partner.)
- *"All I ever do is yell—I don't actually hit my partner. As long as my partner does what I say, no one will get hurt."*
- *"Hitting actually helps us. I get my tension relieved and it makes my partner behave. Afterwards, we both feel better and we treat each other better."*
- *"Every once in a while you have to make a little trip to knuckle junction. When they come back, it is just like we were on the honeymoon."*



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The image projected by a batterer at a place of worship will be very different than what occurs at home. You may see a caring and concerned parent and partner who is anxious about the health, safety and well being of the family. This is in deep contrast to the person who once home establishes an atmosphere charged with tension and fear.

**Offender intervention is not a magic cure for abusive behavior. Only the batterer can determine whether the changes will be made and whether they will be permanent.**

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## The Criminal Justice Response

As a faith leader, it is vital that you understand and be able to distinguish when family violence is in violation of the law. If family violence escalates to physical abuse or property damage, Arizona law mandates that an arrest should be made.



Arizona Revised Statute 13-3601 defines domestic violence as:

1. The relationship between the victim and the defendant is one of marriage or former marriage or of persons residing or having resided in the same household.
2. The victim and the defendant have a child in common.
3. The victim or the defendant is pregnant by the other party.
4. The victim is related to the defendant or the defendant's spouse by blood or court order as a parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother or sister or by marriage as a parent-in-law, grandparent-in-law, stepparent, step grandparent, stepchild, step grandchild, brother-in-law or sister-in-law.
5. The victim is a child who resides or has resided in the same household as the defendant and is related by blood to a former spouse of the defendant or to a person of the opposite sex who resides or who has resided in the same household as the defendant and involves any one or more of the following crimes:
  - Assault
  - Aggravated Assault
  - Stalking
  - Harassment
  - Order of Protection Violation
  - Disorderly Conduct
  - Endangerment
  - Criminal Trespass
  - Kidnapping/Unlawful Imprisonment
  - Threatening/Intimidation

As a faith leader, there are some actions that you can take to ensure that a victim and victim's children are safe and that the abuser is held accountable.

1. Call 9-1-1 immediately if you encounter any of the previously listed crimes. Do not attempt to intervene in a potentially dangerous situation.
2. Assist the victim with obtaining an order of protection, if he or she chooses.

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## ORDERS OF PROTECTION

An Order of Protection is a legal court document that typically in domestic violence cases prohibits the abuser from having any type of contact with the victim and often will prohibit the abuser from going near any property that the victim is vacating.

A court will often issue an Order of Protection when the plaintiff is adequately able to demonstrate that the defendant is at risk for causing them harm.

An order of protection may be obtained at any court. However, depending upon the situation an order of protection can also be obtained at a family advocacy center (see Appendix A for location and contact information).

Emergency Orders of Protection may be requested if there is a demonstrated need and the court has closed for the day. The family advocacy centers or law enforcement can also assist with obtaining Emergency Orders of Protection, which are only valid until the close of the court's next business day. It is important to note the victim needs to apply for a regular Order of Protection before the Emergency Order expires.



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# VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

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## Effects on Children

An estimated 3.3 million children are exposed to violence by family members against their mothers or female caretakers each year.

Forty to sixty percent of men who abuse women also abuse children.

In the year 2000, four children in Arizona were killed as a result of domestic violence. An additional 46 children were left without parents.

Children are the forgotten victims in the abuse between adult partners. This may seriously traumatize the child. When one parent or parental figure perpetrates abuse against another parent, it can be devastating. Lingering effects can be noticed throughout the entire life cycle even when the child was never physically struck.

Violence during the prenatal period may lead to low birth weight and possible birth defects. Low birth weight is a leading indicator of potential future problems. Infants face increased odds of being struck or dropped during a violent incident, sleep disruptions or failure to thrive. Preschool children may exhibit nightmares, sleep disturbances and insecurities possibly leading to excessive clinging. A male school age child may exhibit external symptoms such as fighting, school acting out and property destruction. A school age female will more likely internalize the violence and display symptoms of depression, anxiety and physical complaints. Adolescents will often disengage from the family prematurely without learning adequate life skills.

Children who have experienced domestic violence in the home may appear:

- Sad, fearful, depressed or anxious.
- Aggressively defiant or passively compliant.
- Have a limited tolerance for frustration or stress.

In a home where violence occurs, it may be hidden from the outside world, but those on the inside are well aware of what is occurring. Children may or may not be recipients of the abuse themselves but all of them are victims. These experiences will follow them throughout their lives and may impact all of their future relationships.

These children will many times display the effects of the violent home with headaches, intestinal problems, sleep disturbances and other physical or psychological symptoms. School behavior can often be affected as well. This may include dropping grades or poor attitude. The child may often exhibit daytime sleepiness since the violent episodes often interrupt sleep cycles.



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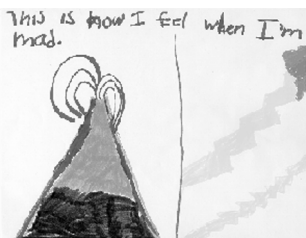
When addressing violence within the family, children must be considered equally as important as the adult partners. Children are the family members without choices. They are the family members who have no opportunity to decide whether or not they remain in the abusive situation. In Appendix D, a chart is available and shows some of the characteristics of a nurturing relationship for a child.

There are several opportunities to assist children in managing the effects of family violence. These intervention opportunities include assessing the danger the child is in. While it is appropriate to work with an adult victim and discuss options for leaving or remaining in the relationship, if a child is involved and being physically or psychologically harmed, the situation must be closely examined.

If there is any cause for concern for the child's welfare, immediate action must be taken. This is best done in conjunction with the non-abusive adult family member. If this is not possible, local authorities must be brought in to protect the child.

If the information regarding the abuse in the family comes from a child and not the adult, it is critical to protect the child and the confidence placed in you. This does not alleviate the need to notify Child Protective Services but it does require taking extreme caution when doing so and making certain the situation is as safe as possible for the child and any adult victims.

It is important to model non-violent behavior for children who have experienced violence in their home. Children learn not only from their parent but all adults around them.



Remember, if and when the victims of family violence leaves the batterer, they are most vulnerable and at the point of greatest risk. Children can be assisted in developing a safety plan and making some decisions on how to protect themselves to the best of their abilities.

Many times, the children feel responsible for everything happening in the family and will attempt to maintain a perfect room, perfect grades and other impossible goals. Children often believe they are the cause of the violence and will work hard to stop the violence.

Many times older children, especially boys, will be injured in an attempt to protect their mother. An overwhelming number of youth incarcerated for murder are there for killing the man battering their mother.

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## Teens and Dating Violence

Dating should be a time of carefree fun and learning about someone else. However, dates can become settings of violent coercion between a couple who have not yet even committed their lives together.

Dating violence among teens can be devastating to future relationships. It is important to remember that young adults who are involved in dating violence have fewer experiences upon which to draw. Most of their friends are not any more experienced than they are and are unable to offer appropriate advice. Since most of these teens have had adult privileges for a short time, they are unwilling to obtain assistance by sharing this information with the adults in their lives.

Family and friends may discuss their concerns and talk about the signs of physical injuries, truancy or falling grades, social isolation, changes in moods or personality, use of alcohol or drugs, pregnancy, or symptoms in which an individual is more emotional or crying easily and hysterically.

It is very vital to have this information available in a variety of ways through youth and young adult groups in the faith communities. Make sure a list of rape crisis centers, domestic violence hotlines and other service providers is available and accessible where it can be viewed privately and safely.

Dating violence usually takes one or more of three forms:

- Physical assaults from pushing to broken bones to fatal attacks.
- Sexual assaults, from unwanted touching to demands for sex to rape.
- Emotional assaults such as name calling, insults, and controlling where and with whom the victim spends time.

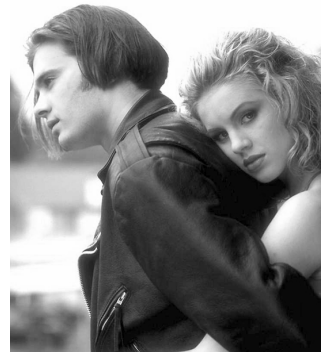
If you suspect that a young adult you know is involved in dating violence, it is important to check it out and offer suggestions and support.

Some questions you can ask: Are you going out with someone who:

Is jealous and possessive toward you; won't let you have friends; checks up on you; won't accept breaking up?

Tries to control you by being very bossy, giving orders, making all the decisions, not taking your opinion seriously?

Scares you? Makes you worry about reactions to things you say or do? Threatens you; uses or owns weapons?



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Is violent, has a history of fighting, loses temper quickly, or brags about mistreating others?

Pressures you for sex or is forceful or scary about sex? Gets too serious about the relationship too quickly?

Abuses alcohol or other drugs and pressures you to take them?

Blames you for any mistreatment? Says you provoked it?

Has a history of bad relationships and blames the other person for the problems in the relationship?

Makes your family and friends uneasy and concerned for your safety?

A “Power and Control Wheel for Dating Violence” has been developed and is in Appendix D. The coercion used by a batterer is similar to what is used by a batterer in other abusive relationships. Statements using persuasion, guilt trips, pressure and manipulation are commonly used to force victims into doing the batterer’s bidding. A Safety Plan with Teens is also included in Appendix B and can be used by a victim to find ways to stay safe.

Victims stay in the relationship due to the demands placed by the batterer. It is important to remember to support the victim and continue to reassure victims it is not their fault.



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## Domestic Violence in the Aging Population

The population over the age of eighty-five in the United States is the fastest growing segment of the population. Abuse of the elderly comes as one of the most frightening acts heard about in the daily news. History has taught us to revere and care for our elderly, especially those related to us.

The frail elderly constitute a population who will need more and more assistance as this population grows. This assistance often comes from a partner, an adult child or a paid caregiver. There are times that this care is beyond the scope of the caregiver's capabilities, and may result in neglect or even active abuse.

There are two main types of elder abuse. One is partner abuse, a relationship that may or may not have been abusive in the past. The second is caregiver abuse, which can be family or other. This article will only look at partner abuse.

There are times when the abuse has been a continuing problem in the relationship. At other times, failing physical and mental health creates a shift in the relationship and leads to a dependence, which creates new dynamics in the relationship.

Passive neglect may occur when the batterer is not providing care such as medication, food or other essential services. This may be due to lack of knowledge or understanding about what needs there are to be met.

Other types of abuse are deliberate acts of violence. Active neglect is the deliberate withholding of caregiver services. This may include denial of food, health care or deprivation of assistive needs. Psychological abuse is an intentional infliction of mental distress. This can be name-calling, humiliation or demeaning statements. Financial abuse is the illegal or unauthorized use of property, funds or other assets.

Physical abuse inflicts pain or injury, uses physical coercion or even confinement against the victim's will. Often this can start out with slaps and shoving and can escalate into physical injuries.

This is a brief assessment for elder abuse. It can be used to determine if an older person in the congregation is at risk for abuse.

### RISK FACTORS

- Physically or mentally impaired.
- Dependent physically or financially upon partner.





- Possible poor relationship with partner.
- Aged 65 or older.
- Caregiver has history of mental illness or substance abuse.

#### **SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE**

- Injuries inconsistent with reported causes.
- Bruises at various stages of healing.
- Lengthy interval between injury and obtaining medical treatment.
- Unusual patterns of injury.
- Evidence of sexual assault.

#### **SIGNS OF NEGLECT**

- Poor hygiene.
- Malnutrition or dehydration.
- Inadequate or unkept clothing.
- Unmet physical needs.
- Noncompliance with medical treatments.

#### **EMOTIONAL NEGLECT**

- Social isolation of victim.
- Victim afraid of partner.
- Emotional abuse of victim.
- Victim threatened by partner.

There is a local hotline to assist in cases of elder abuse. Services available include respite shelter and counseling services for the victim and the batterer. Please check the Resources Section in Appendix A.

# IN THE WORKPLACE

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## When Domestic Violence Enters the Workplace

When domestic violence occurs at home, it often follows the victim to work. Employee policies and procedures within a congregation should address how the organization responds as an employer. Recognizing the importance of protecting not only the victim but also the entire workforce, certain precautions can be taken.

There are several ways to improve the workforce atmosphere regarding family violence. Some practices that can be used to address domestic violence include:

### DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

When managers and supervisors are trained to have an awareness and sensitivity for signs of domestic violence, it leads to personnel being more open to discussing the issue.

### DEVELOP AN EDUCATION PLAN FOR EMPLOYEES

Creating an environment in which it is safe to discuss family violence makes an employee more comfortable in sharing this information. Employee trainings about domestic violence are a great place to start. Posters and safety cards in restrooms offer the information in a location where privacy can be assured.



### TAKE THE INITIATIVE

If you believe an employee is a victim of abuse, take the initiative and bring up your observations in a private conversation. Some opening comments could be, "I noticed the bruises you had last week and you seem upset and worried today." "I am concerned you are being hurt by someone." "No one deserves to be hurt by someone else."

### IMPROVE SECURITY MEASURES

When a family violence situation has been brought to your attention, it is wise to review potential lapses in security. This could be as simple as making certain that the employee is walked to and from the car. If the employee is being harassed by telephone, someone else can screen calls. If there are issues regarding the safety of the workplace such as doors open to the public, an analysis of how to best protect the victim should take place.

### MAKE REFERRALS

Whether or not an employee has left the batterer, the importance of continued support cannot be overstated. Providing referral numbers to local shelters is one of the best ways to do this. This is not the time to refer to a local mental

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health center or counselor. The staff at the local shelters can assist a victim in developing a safety plan, locating a support group, finding space in a shelter if needed, or obtaining outpatient client services.

### **DEVELOP POLICIES THAT ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

In Appendix G, a sample of a domestic violence policy for employers is included.

If an employee has a restraining order, it is important to take reasonable steps to protect the employee without disruption of activities. Obtain a copy of the restraining order. Discuss how much information the victim wants to be made “public.” It is important to give other employees some knowledge of the potential for violence in the workplace.

Domestic violence is not a short-term problem and policies need to reflect that. Victims may need time off for court appearances, counseling sessions for themselves and children, medical care or other necessities. If possible, leave policies should be flexible during this time to allow for the family to work toward a safer future.

If the staff member involved is the batterer, it may be necessary to prohibit the use of communications equipment in order to protect the victim from further harassment. Additionally, the batterer may also need time off for court appearances and intervention sessions.

If both the victim and batterer are on staff, great care must be taken to ensure the safety of the victim and hold the offender accountable. Remember that the first priority is to make the victim safe. All other considerations are secondary.

# INTERFAITH PERSPECTIVES

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## The Protestant Perspective

Violence against women can be found throughout the Bible, and is often perpetrated by those within the family circle (Hagar in Genesis 16 and 21, Tamar in 2 Samuel 13, the Levite's concubine in Judges 19, and Jephtah's daughter in Judges 13:29-40). It is important for Christian interpreters to recognize that these instances of violence against women are more a reflection of human fallenness and limitation than they are revelations of God's nature and intention for women.

Within the Christian tradition, there are many views about how scripture is properly interpreted. These diverse views lead to a variety of opinions about the appropriate relationships between men and women and how Christian households should be construed and managed. Certain texts, views, and beliefs are especially problematic for victims of family violence.

The household codes in the Pauline epistles, particularly those instructions in Ephesians 5:21, are often used to perpetuate abuse and convince victims (most often female) that they should remain in the family and "try harder" in order to preserve the family, regardless of the consequences to themselves. Careful analysis of this text reveals that: 1) it is almost certainly addressed primarily to men, not to women, since a preponderance of the instructions in the text are for men, not women; and 2) the guiding principle of ALL of the instructions is that men and women in a marital relationship are to "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." (RSV) The overarching theme is mutuality of relationship, with each treating the other as they would treat themselves. The model for men in Christian relationships is the relationship of Christ to the church, a model of loving self-sacrifice that NEVER resorts to violence, no matter what the provocation. To insist that women be subject to their husbands when their husbands are inflicting violence upon them narrowly interprets and grossly distorts the meaning and significance of this text.

The admonition in Matthew 5:39 "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other also" is another text that raises problems for victims of violence. Walter Wink has compelling interpretation of this text which transforms the simple act of turning the other cheek into an act of nonviolent, self-protective defiance: the first blow would almost certainly be a backhand with the right hand (the left hand is never used in biblical culture). Turning the other cheek would make it impossible to land another backhanded blow with the right hand! In any case, this text implies a willing nonviolence by someone who is in a position to make a choice. It should not be used to encourage a victim to remain in an abusive relationship.

The beliefs of victims play an important role in perpetuating family violence. Some victims fail to seek help (and some religious leaders fail to be helpful)

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because they believe that they have done something in their past that merits punishment, and they see the violence against themselves as the just punishment for past sins. One victim stated in a therapy session “I am being punished by God with this abuse since I had relations with someone who was not my husband.” This view may seem compatible with Old Testament texts that describe one nation as the rod of God’s judgment on another. It is important to note the growing understanding of God that unfolds throughout the Old Testament, from a narrow tribal God, to the God of all nations, who uses one to discipline the other, finally culminating in the New Testament understanding of God as one whose love for ALL fallen, sinful, imperfect human persons was so great that God gave God’s only son for the redemption of all humankind. This God of love, who created men and women and called them good, does not punish one of God’s precious children through the violence of another, no matter what they may have done. God also does not intend for one of God’s children to abuse another (The greatest commandments are to love God and “Love your neighbor as yourself.”)

Similar and related beliefs interpret the abuse as “God’s will for me” or part of “God’s plan for my life.” These imply a static and unchanging future for each person that should not be questioned. This view/belief does not square well with Moses’ interactions with God, in which Moses challenges God on multiple occasions, and God apparently changes God’s mind. Victims should be encouraged to focus on God’s desire for all human persons, as evidenced in Jesus’ life and words: “I came that you might have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10 RSV)

Religious leaders who have not carefully thought through the issues of domestic violence sometimes advise victims that their abuse will “build character.” This diminishes the life- or soul-threatening potential of violence and deflects attention from the central problem: stopping the abuser and the abuse, and keeping the victim safe in the meantime.

The Christian emphasis on forgiveness can be very problematic when confronting a situation of abuse. Family, friends, and religious leaders may push the victim to forgive the abuser before the victim is ready, especially if the abuser says he or she is sorry. Religious leaders should be wary of “cheap grace” in dealing with abusers: it is far easier for an abuser to say “Sorry” than it is for him (her) to amend his (her) life and give up the deeply ingrained habit of abusing. A group of offenders in treatment revealed the ease in which their faith leaders had forgiven them. They felt this quick absolution was a hindrance in confronting their abusive behavior. Abusers must be held accountable, as an act of Christian love. Victims should be assured that a committed life of prayer will lead them to forgiveness when they are ready and able and strong enough to offer it. All parties should be aware that this may take a very long time, especially if the abuse has continued over a long period of time.

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The perceived sanctity of the marriage vow can be a problem for victims and for religious leaders seeking to help them. Religious leaders must be careful not to privilege the marriage relationship over God's intention that all persons should be valued and treated with respect and dignity. The marriage vow to love and care for each other forever is broken when one partner chooses to use violence to assert power and control over the other in order to have their own way. It is not the responsibility of the victim to stay within the relationship and work to eliminate the abuse (it is also not possible for the victim to eliminate the abuse). It is the responsibility of the abuser to stop the violence, whether it is physical, emotional, sexual, or financial, in order to uphold the vows that he (she) has made.

It is possible for an offender to make changes and eliminate the abuse. This will require a strong commitment to learn and maintain new behaviors that demonstrate love. If the offender is not willing to make these changes, religious leaders should be willing to help the victim explore the possibility of separation and/or divorce. It is important to stay focused on what is breaking up the family: it is NOT the separation or divorce, but the abuse or violence that caused it.

Victims feel a profound sense of abandonment from friends, family, the criminal justice system, and the healthcare system. They may also feel a profound sense of abandonment from God. They need ongoing reassurance from their religious community (clergy and laity alike) that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39, RSV), whether they can feel God's love at this moment, or not.

In Ephesians 5:28-29 Paul writes, "Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. For no man hates his own flesh but nourishes it and cherishes it, as Christ does the church because we are members of his body." This is the ideal for the Christian relationship.

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## The Catholic Perspective

Pope John Paul II has said, "Both man and woman are human beings to an equal degree. In the New Testament, Jesus consistently reached out to those on the fringes of society, those without power or authority, those with no one to speak on their behalf. He taught that all women and men are individuals worthy of respect and dignity." Can we do no less than to speak out and assist those who suffer the physical and emotional pain of being battered within their own home?

John Paul II further addresses domestic violence by writing on the scripture so often used by a batterer: "Wives should be obedient to their husbands." He then goes on to include the rest of the quotation, "Husbands love your wives as Christ loves his bride the church." When looking at the relationship of Jesus to the church, it is recognized that he served lovingly and by offering himself. The Holy Father says that passage involving mutual subjection of both husband and wife out of love for Christ, not one over the other.

Another scripture, which is often used by batterers to ensure their forgiveness, is Matthew 18:21-35 where Peter asks the Lord, "How often must I forgive?" and the Lord responds, "seventy times seven times." Many batterers use this to force their victims to continuously forgive the abuse that places them and their children in danger. When preaching on this text, choose your words wisely and remember many of your parishioners are victims of violence either now, in the past or in the future. Do not let this passage become a tool for a batterer to continue to manipulate a victim.

In a Vatican statement prepared for the conference on women in Beijing, China, the Holy Father wrote that marriage is an equal partnership between wife and husband. This certainly is not what a violent relationship represents. The one who is battering is certainly in a position of power and control and the victim remains unable to regain any power in the relationship.

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## SPEAKING THE UNSPEAKABLE

*A Pastoral Letter on Domestic Violence*

*Most Rev. Ricardo Ramírez, C.S.B., Bishop of Las Cruces*

The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, is endowed with an inherent dignity that demands respect. Violence, in all its forms, gravely offends that dignity and is, at the same time, an offense against God. This is particularly true of the violence that takes place within the home. Abuse, whether physical, verbal, mental or sexual, that takes place among family members is known as “domestic violence,” a tragic reflection of the violent society of our day. The Church raises her voice in denouncing the sin of domestic violence that erodes the dignity of the human person.

In this letter we address the Catholics of the Diocese of Las Cruces as well as the people of good will in the southern part of the State of New Mexico. We seek to raise consciousness regarding the tragic reality of domestic violence and to suggest ways to attain greater peace and harmony in our families.

### **PART I: A PROFILE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

For 2000 years the Church has proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the joyful message that in Christ we have been reconciled to the Father and sealed with the Holy Spirit for eternal life. At its very core, the Good News proclaims the fullness of life in God. We preach the Gospel of life. It is from this perspective that we speak.

#### **A. Domestic Violence in General**

We cannot ignore the violence that is destroying our families and scarring our common humanity. This condition stands in stark contradiction to the Gospel of life. It crosses all socio-economic, religious, and ethnic boundaries. It is manifested in various forms: degrading comments, manipulation of financial resources to intimidate, the use of physical strength to bully and, ultimately, to injure or kill. These are only a few in a long list of its manifestations. The form may vary but the result is the same. Domestic violence exchanges the natural bonds of love and nurturing for the unnatural relationships of aggressors trampling mercilessly on the dignity, rights, and aspirations of those they have promised to love and cherish.

The nature of domestic violence has been a tragic element in the evolution of the world’s civilizations and continues to be a plague of epidemic proportions. Many people in our society have experienced and continue to experience the terror of living in danger of being attacked by another family member. For generations, violence in the home was common and went virtually unchallenged. It took courageous women and men to bring the ugly reality of domestic violence into the public forum.

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The plague of violence in the home is a learned behavior and is passed on from one generation to the next. This learned behavior is often triggered by alcohol or drugs. Sadly, we know very little about the treatment and prevention of domestic violence. We tend to oversimplify the problem by reducing violence in the home to economic and/or social pressures that create stress within the family unit. Such is not the case. Indeed, domestic violence transcends economic and social class. Perpetrators and victims come from every walk of life, from the very poor to the very rich, and from the social outcasts to the most respected citizens of our communities. But there is still very much that we do not know about domestic violence.

We are told by experts that domestic violence is the most underestimated and under reported crime in the United States, and that it is the single most significant cause of injury to women, affecting about two million per year. Some sources estimate that as many as four million women suffer some kind of battering every year. If we take that number of women affected by violence, and if we further project that the average family size is 2.2 persons per household, the conclusion is that at least 8.8 million Americans are affected annually by this virulent evil.

#### **B. Domestic Violence in New Mexico**

In 1999 there were 16,596 victims of domestic violence identified by law enforcement agencies across the state of New Mexico. There were 13,184 new clients served by the 33 domestic violence service providers throughout the state. Fifty-seven percent (7,529) of the new clients were adult victims, 25 percent (3,313) were children, and 18 percent (2,342) were offenders. A profile of reported domestic violence cases within the geographic boundaries of the Diocese of Las Cruces that encompasses the ten counties in southern New Mexico indicates that there were a total of 3,280 complaints registered during 1999.

The Las Cruces Victim Assistance Program data for the past three years indicate a 40 percent increase in cases reported to the Las Cruces Police Department. La Casa, Inc., a shelter for victims of domestic violence in Doña Ana County, shows an increase in adult and child care days from 4,636 in 1994-95 to 16,638 in 1998-99, representing an increase of 278 percent. While this increase may be due, in part, to various factors such as population growth, increased reporting, and an increased awareness among the general public, we must recognize the possibility that domestic violence is growing.

Compounding the situation is the fact that children residing in homes where domestic violence occurs are themselves 50-55% of the time victims of physical or sexual abuse. The "nights of terror" and other horrors experienced by children contribute to life-long difficulties with self-esteem.

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Victims are not just numbers; they are thinking, feeling and often frightened individuals. Domestic violence has been, and continues to be, tolerated and minimized. This issue will be solved only when violence is uprooted from our culture – a culture that too often justifies and even glorifies violence.

## **PART II: GOD’S CREATION AND PLAN OF SALVATION**

The accounts of creation found in Scripture make it clear that God created man and woman with equal dignity. Both reflect the divine glory and together they complement one another. Both derive their inherent dignity, personal goodness, and original beauty from the Creator who delights in the creation of man and woman and affirms their existence by exclaiming “how good” it is (cf. Gen. 1:31).

God blessed man and woman with the capacity to be co-creators and to be the foundational members of the family. In this blessing we find the theological and spiritual foundation of the family. They were to cultivate the earth together in mutual help, continuing the creative action of God.

### **A. The Fall and the Redemption of the Human Person**

The dream that God had for man and woman was one of abundance of life. Original sin, however, gave way to fragmentation and broken relationships. Utter confidence in God and trust in one another was replaced by insecurity and fear. Sin transformed the original paradise that God created for man and woman into arid desolation and banishment where the most basic needs for the sustenance of life and bringing forth new life would now be achieved only through great effort (cf. Gen. 3: 16 - 19).

The consequence of this original fall is most dramatically portrayed in the story of Cain and Abel. Anger, resentment, and insecurity grew within the heart of Cain. After inviting Abel out for a walk, “...Cain turned on his brother Abel and killed him” (Gen. 4:8). With this example, Scripture teaches that violence and death are born within the human heart that is broken and wounded by insecurity, jealousy and fear.

We cannot understand domestic violence or any other types of violence merely as a sociological phenomenon, nor can we seek solutions through social efforts alone. Violence, at its very core, is a spiritual malaise and can only be fully eradicated through personal conversion leading to ongoing transformation. In Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God made flesh, we have been adopted as sons and daughters of God. Through the great mystery of the Incarnation, the Son of God became intimately united with every human being. By sharing our broken and fragile human nature, Jesus Christ joined himself with each person and shares with us every human experience except sin, ultimately freeing us from the bondage of sin, death, and all the other consequences of sin. “It is in Christ and through his blood that we have been redeemed and our sins

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forgiven, so immeasurably generous is God's favor to us" (Eph. 1:7). The redemption of Christ touches every aspect of human experience and brings about a transformation of the human heart. Our human hearts are no longer ruled by the wound of sin and hatred. We are not to seek domination of others. Human violence, rooted in insecurity and fear, can now be healed by the love of God that has been poured into our hearts (cf. Rom. 5:4).

In Jesus Christ, our restored relationships are based on respect and trust and, above all, on love – a sacrificial love that seeks the good of the other. This is the foundation of all our relationships, and in particular, of the relationship in Christian marriage and family life.

### **B. The Dignity and Mission of Marriage and Family Life**

The Church teaches that God envisions marriage as an intimate community of the whole of life based on love. With the irrevocable personal consent they exchange, married persons make a gift of self to one another. Thus, marriage reflects God's unconditional and ever faithful love. Just as marriage is a sacred bond, so too family life is sacred, because in the family persons experience intimately the love of God. Accordingly, Pope John Paul II reminds us that "...the family has a mission to become more and more what it is, that is to say, a community of life and love in an effort that will find fulfillment, as will everything created and redeemed, in the [reign] of God." Violence occurring within the family severely limits the possibilities for a family to fulfill its mission to further God's reign of love and peace.

We must confront domestic violence, for it is a shameful exercise of power against those whose lives are entwined by ties of blood and family. We join with the bishops of the United States and other groups to say that "violence in any form – physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal – is sinful; many times, it is a crime as well." Clearly, domestic violence is never justified, for it sacrilegiously fouls the sacred covenanted relationships of marriage.

## **PART III: THE CHURCH SEEKS FORGIVENESS**

The Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church teaches that "The Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect." However, the Church, too, is comprised of fallible and sinful human beings who, through sinfulness and errors, mar and distort that innate holiness. Our pastoral experience tells us that not only in the past, but even today, spouses – most often women – are exhorted over and over to forgive and forget spousal abuse. At times clergy tell those abused to resume marital life and thus be further victimized. In so doing clergy fail to acknowledge and validate the experience of victims.

Well-meaning as they may be, these pastoral ministers do not recognize the insidious nature of domestic violence as emanating from a culture and an

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environment of domination and subordination. To encourage a victim to return to such an environment without the benefit of qualified professional help is irresponsible. When such errors are made or sinful actions are excused in God's name, the consequences are even more tragic.

We recognize that all too often Scripture is used incorrectly to justify husbands dominating their wives. Such is the case with the passage found in St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, "wives be submissive to your husbands" (Eph. 5: 22). This passage, which was shaped by its times and culture, reflects the highly hierarchical household which was part of the Greco-Roman empire in which St. Paul was writing. In that society, just as slaves had to submit to their masters, so, too, wives had to submit to their husbands. Fortunately, ours is a very different cultural setting wherein all persons are considered equal. The context of St. Paul's message, however, exhorts husbands and, indeed, all spouses to love one another as Christ loves the Church (Eph. 5:25). In Christian marriage, spouses give their lives for one another as Christ gave his life for the Church. Husbands and wives love each other in a way in which they consider and treat each other as equals. This is the gospel mandate.

We understand that not only the Church but also society has responded inadequately to the social problem of domestic violence. We believe that the inadequacy of response by both Church and society results, at least in part, from an apparent close association between violence and patriarchy. We believe that any time one group is placed in a position of power to the exclusion of the other, the subordinated group is at risk. We concur with other Catholic bishops who suggest that the concentration of power and privilege in the hands of men "leads to the control and subordination of women, generating social inequality between the sexes." Furthermore, we are aware that Church ministers have failed, at times, to recognize domestic violence for what it is because of the way in which they, themselves, exercise power.

For this, we seek forgiveness.

Violence inflicted in the family on spouses, parents, children or siblings is intolerable and unconscionable. We ask the forgiveness of all persons affected by the inadequate response of the Church's pastoral leaders to violence which has occurred in homes and in the family – places meant to be of sanctuary for all persons.

### **Conclusion: A Message of Hope and Commitment**

As the People of God in southern New Mexico, we hear the cry of the blood of Abel, the wail of Rachel, the anguished and stifled cries of the Holy Innocents as they mingle with the modern victims of violence. This violence must stop! We call on every member of society to be open to the power of graced living. We invite all to be aware of the scope of domestic violence and to

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be committed to find ways to end this nightmare. We dedicate our efforts to heal the victims and perpetrators of violence. We seek the combined wisdom of our brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations, those of other faiths, and all citizens of good will to help us find and establish strategies that promote authentic peace, justice, and harmony in our homes and families. Together, let us begin this new millennium with determination to bring about loving and respectful relationships within the family.

The development of this pastoral letter and the hearings that were held throughout our diocese have begun the dialogue. Now we must put that dialogue into action. Specifically we will:

- Create a safe and supportive environment within our Church family for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence to seek help.
- Renew our understanding of the biblical imperative of respect for human dignity and the natural obligations that spring from all relationships, especially marriage and family life.
- Establish pastoral guidelines to respond effectively to victims and perpetrators and to include pertinent references to the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and its special emphasis upon the rights of undocumented victims of domestic violence.
- Educate our pastoral leaders to respond with the spiritual, practical and compassionate support that will best assist victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.
- Embrace the teachable moments of sacrament preparation to raise awareness of domestic violence and its devastating impact upon all relationships, especially the sacred bond of marriage.
- Address the scope of domestic violence as it is significantly and tragically manifested here in New Mexico; including our own complicity as individuals, as a community, and as a religious organization.
- Establish networks with legal, medical and civic communities uniting our energies to support continuing changes in public opinion and policy.
- Recognize and challenge the culture of violence and degradation of all people as promoted through the irresponsible use of the internet, television, film, entertainment industry and our own behavior.

Alone we cannot even begin to propose solutions to the problem of domestic violence. With this pastoral letter, we begin a process together with persons of other faith communities, professionals with special expertise, and all citizens to create greater collaboration and develop strategies to eliminate this pervasive evil.

Promulgated the sixth day of July of 2001, on the Feast of Saint Maria Goretti.

Ricardo Ramírez, C.S.B.  
Bishop of Las Cruces

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## The Jewish Perspective

"A violent criminal act is the responsibility of the violent person and not the victim." These words should ring true for all people, not only Jewish people. It is certainly not the fault of the victim when violence permeates the relationship.

The Jewish marriage ceremony is known as "Kiddushin," or sanctification. This sanctification reminds Jewish people to express their holiness through their marriage. Judaism views marriage as necessary for fulfillment, a part of God's plan. The Jewish faith and culture places great emphasis on the family, and the unfortunate reality of domestic violence comes as a great shock to many both inside and outside of the community.

Barbara Harris of the Transition Center in New York states that a Jewish woman stays in an abusive relationship by an average of five to seven years longer than a non-Jewish woman does.

Women are expected to ensure there is peace in the home. The concept of shalom bayit is the core belief in maintaining peace in a Jewish home. Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski in his book, *The Shame Borne of Silence: Spouse Abuse in the Jewish Community*, gives religious leaders text sources that are guidelines for protecting women and children first, and maintaining shalom bayit as a secondary goal.

There is great resolve in Jewish communities to achieve and maintain peace in the Jewish home; rabbis consider it the forerunner of peace on earth. "Peace will remain a distant vision until we do the work of peace ourselves. If peace is to be brought into the world, we must bring it first to our families and communities."

If the goal of peace in the home is not achieved, there is a fear of bringing a shanda or shame to the family. In many Jewish communities, there is a reluctance to admit that all is not well within the four walls of the home. There is an expectation of non-violence within the family. This does not mean that a victim and children should remain in a violent home to keep up the appearance of shalom bayit. Their safety is of primary importance.

Another very real fear for observant victims considering leaving is of not being able to observe the laws of kashrut. In Maricopa County, the Chrysalis programs offer services for the observant Jewish victim, including a support group, outpatient victim and offender services and kosher meals if in the shelter program. Their number is available in the resources section. Talmudic writings urge a man to "honor your wife that you may be blessed with wealth" and "not to make a woman weep, for God counts her tears." Clearly the mandate is there to keep violence out of the home.

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## The Muslim Perspective

“It is not Sunnah to hit a woman or a child, the prophet Muhammed (Saas) never did either one.”

Hadith: “O My servants, I have forbidden oppression for Myself and have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress one another.” (Hadith Qudsi related by Muslim, Rrimidhi and Ibn Majah)

The holy Qur’an contains verses which clearly indicate the relationship between husband and wife is to be one of kindness, mutual respect and caring. Other verses indicate that oppression or ill treatment of women is not to be tolerated. Anyone who violates the limits set by Allah, is labeled a “transgressor” in the Qur’an.

Imans (and other persons) should be protectors of all community members’ safety. As in the case of all religious leaders, Imans should recognize their limitations in working with family members involved in domestic violence. The importance of referring both the victim and batterer to experienced domestic violence professionals cannot be minimized. If it is necessary to have the victim leave the family home and seek safety elsewhere, it may be essential to assist the family in maintaining food restrictions and other cultural needs.

When an incident of violence in a Muslim community is made known, many community members turn away and avoid interfering. Others take the position; it is the Allah given right to maintain control within the family no matter what. Many Imans recognize the violence is not part of the Muslim tradition but are unable to determine how to best intervene. [In Appendix D, there is a Power and Control Wheel developed to serve the needs of the Muslim community.]

In the prophet’s last sermon, he exhorted “be kind to women—you have rights over your wives, and be kind to them, for they are your partners and committed helpers.”

The following pages are taken from Sound Vision Foundation and are reprinted to assist the Muslim community in dealing with the issue of domestic violence.

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## **TWELVE TIPS OF IMANS FOR DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

If you are an Iman who has come from abroad, you have seen how heavy the burden is on Imans in the West. While in the Muslim countries, your role may have been simply leading prayers and teaching children Qur'an. In North America you cannot do only this.

The Iman is the leader for the community in the fullest sense of the word, and his responsibilities include more than leading prayers and teaching. He must deal with issues perhaps never touched upon "back home." Domestic violence in the Muslim community is just one.

### **1. Know the definition of abuse.**

There are different types of abuse (physical, verbal, emotional, etc.). Know what types of abuse there are and know their telltale signs. There is plenty of material on this subject, which can be found at police stations, women's centers and libraries. It will also help if you read a few books about domestic violence. Maybe you want to add some good books on this topic in your Islamic center's library as well.

### **2. Understand this is not a personal matter.**

Domestic violence is not a private matter between husband and wife that should be ignored. Domestic violence can lead to the destruction and separation of a Muslim family, which is already so fragile in a predominately non-Muslim environment. The destruction of one family is the destruction of one unit of the Muslim community. As leaders, Imans have a duty to help those suffering in this crisis. Remember that Muslims must help their brothers and sisters whether they are the oppressed or the oppressor. Not only must we help the sister who is being abused we must also help the brother who is abusing to make him stop. Domestic violence can lead to murder of the sister and the brother being put in jail. Children would be separated from parents and most likely put into non-Muslim foster homes if this happened.

### **3. Approach domestic violence as you would any social problems.**

Provide solutions, not just threats of Hellfire to men who abuse. Remember that a person who has this problem can change Insha Allah (if Allah wills) if there is help and support from the community leaders like the Iman. (Note: This is in conjunction with an Offender Intervention Program.)

### **4. Know what services exist in the community.**

Imans should know where the nearest battered women's shelter is. They should know if there are crisis hotlines available, as well as safehouses where women can stay if they are trying to escape from a violent husband.

### **5. Be able to assess a crisis and develop a protection plan.**

Consult a counselor (Note: or a battered women's shelter or other domestic

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violence service agency.) about knowing how to assess the level of crisis in a home and help women develop protection plans.

**6. Give your name to a local women's shelter or a crisis line.**

This is important because when there is an emergency involving a Muslim women who wants to contact Muslims, shelters and crisis lines can refer the woman to the mosque or Islamic center and the Iman or another Muslim representative.

**7. Bring the issue to the community's attention.**

It is easier to deny a problem exists when no one talks about it except in hush-hush tones. But when an Iman starts giving Khutbas (sermons) on the topic and discusses it in Islamic study circles (Halaquas) men and women have to start taking it seriously.

A Khutba or discussion on the topic could be structured in the following way:

- Start off giving the example from the Qu'ran (4:34-35) regarding the five steps of conflict resolution and explain that this is not violence.
- Mention that the prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was married 38 years of his life and never hit his wives.
- Mention the steps in verse 4:34-35 are only applicable if the man is totally innocent and the woman is at fault.
- Explain that the last step referred to in this verse is a symbolic gesture with Miswak, which is only allowed in two cases: 1) If the wife is guilty of lewd behavior, 2) if the wife, without any medical reason, refuses to share his bed.
- Be clear and give examples of the kinds of abuse that so exist. For example, a husband regularly threatening to divorce his wife, intimidating her, telling her she is a failure, that she will go to Hell. Telling her he has a right from Allah to abuse her. Mention that abuse in Muslim homes includes pushing, slapping, punching, kicking, beating, bondage, and refusing to help a wife when she is sick or injured.
- Remind people that the Islamic rules of good behavior apply to one's family just as much as to the Muslim community.
- Remind people that Allah does not turn down the Dus (supplication) of the opposed person and if a man is abusing his wife and she makes a Dus against him, Allah, if he wills, will accept it and make it happen.

**A note of caution:** if you do decide to use a case study from the community when talking about domestic violence, make sure not to disclose details which make it obvious to listeners which couple is being discussed. This is a violation of privacy.

**1. Open up the Mosque or Islamic center for abused women.**

Make sure the mosque or Islamic center is open at all times for abused women

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to seek refuge in. Remember the Muslim women would prefer to turn for help to their community before going to non-Muslim shelters and calling non-Muslim run crisis lines. Making sure the Mosque is a “safe spot” can make women consider the mosque as one of their first points of refuge in an emergency. Ensure there is adequate safety in the mosque for fleeing women.

**2. Make yourself available.**

All the community should know contact information and times when the Iman are available. All Imans should have plans in place on how to be reached if there is an emergency. There should be a locked mailbox that only the Iman can open. Another opportunity for an Iman to be accessible is an e-mail address for those who wish to seek guidance while maintaining anonymity.

**3. Establish a social services system or committee.**

In cooperation with Muslim social services professionals in your community, establish a committee, which will develop a system for social services in your community to tackle issues like domestic violence in Muslim homes.

**4. Set up support groups.**

In mosques and Islamic centers, encourage the establishment of support groups for abusers and the victims so they can share their experiences with the other Muslims who may have suffered from domestic violence as well. Make sure wise, trustworthy individuals run the groups.

**5. Make Dua.**

As a leader of the community, the well being of its members is part of the responsibility. Make dua that Allah helps you in this heavy task and that He eases the difficulties of all those suffering in the community; men, women and children.

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## LOCAL RESOURCES

## APPENDIX A

### Domestic Violence Shelters

Shelter Hotline

**(602) 263-8900**

Lists available beds in Maricopa County for all shelters.

Autumn House  
Prehab of Arizona  
P.O. Drawer 5860  
Mesa, AZ 85211-5860  
(480) 835-5555

Chrysalis  
P.O. Box 9956  
Phoenix, AZ 85068  
(602) 955-9059

Chrysalis  
P.O. Box 1551  
Scottsdale, AZ 85252  
(480) 481-0402

De Colores  
Chicanos por la Causa  
P.O. Box 6553  
Phoenix, AZ 85005-6553  
(602) 269-1515  
*(Spanish Speaking Services Available)*

Faith House  
8581 N. 61st Ave.  
Glendale, AZ 85302  
(623) 939-6798

My Sister's Place  
East Valley Catholic Social Services  
610 N. Alma School Road, #18  
Mesa, AZ 85224  
(480) 821-1024

New Life Center  
P.O. Box 5005  
Goodyear, AZ 85338  
(623) 932-4404

Sojourner Center  
P.O. Box 20156  
Phoenix, AZ 85036  
(602) 244-0089

### Crisis Lines

National D. V. Hotline  
1 (800) 799-SAFE

Value Options  
(602) 222-9444

Suicide Prevention  
(480) 784-1500

Community Information and Referral Services  
(602) 263-8856

Maricopa County Shelters - (ACADV) (602) 279-2900 or 1-800-786-7386

### Sexual Assault Information

Arizona Sexual Assault Network  
(602) 254-6400, ext 139

Center Against Sexual Abuse  
2333 N. Central Ave., Ste. #100,  
Phoenix, AZ 85004  
(602) 254-6400

Sexual Assault Recovery Institute  
3625 N. 16th Street, #128  
Phoenix, AZ 85006  
(602) 235-9345

### Children's Services

Child Abuse Hotline  
1-888-767-2445

Child Protective Services  
(602) 530-1800

Crisis Nursery of Phoenix  
(602) 273-7363

East Valley Crisis Nursery  
(480) 969-2308

West Valley Crisis Nursery  
(480) 848-8863

Child Help USA  
(602) 271-4500

### Elder Abuse Information

Adult Protective Services  
1122 N. 7th Street, Ste. #205  
Phoenix, AZ 85006  
1-877-767-2385

Area Agency on Aging  
1366 E. Thomas Road, Ste. #108  
Phoenix, AZ 85014  
(602) 264-2255

Senior Help Line  
(602) 264-4357

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## Victim Witness Services

Gilbert Police Department  
Victim Assistance Program  
945 A S. Gilbert Road  
Gilbert, AZ 85296  
(480) 503-6640

Glendale Police Department  
Victim Assistance Program  
6835 N. 57th Drive  
Glendale, AZ 85301  
(623) 930-3030

Maricopa County Attorney  
Victim Witness Division  
301 W. Jefferson, Ninth Floor  
Phoenix, AZ 85003  
(602) 506-8522

Maricopa County Attorney  
Victim Witness Division  
222 E. Javelina, Ste. 2400  
Mesa, AZ 85210  
(480) 506-2488

Mesa Police Department  
Victim Assistance Program  
130 N. Robson  
Mesa, AZ 85201  
(480) 644-3232

Mesa Prosecutor's Office  
Victim Rights  
245 W. 2nd Street  
Mesa, AZ 85201  
(480) 644-2188

Mesa Center Against Family  
Violence  
225 E. 1st Sreet, Ste. 102  
Mesa, AZ 85201  
(480) 644-4075

Peoria Police Department  
Victim Assistance  
8401 W. Monroe Sreet  
Peoria, AZ 85380  
(623) 979-4222

Phoenix City Prosecutor's Office  
Victim Witness Program  
300 W. Washington  
Phoenix, AZ 85003  
(602) 261-8192

Phoenix Police Department  
Family Advocacy Center  
2120 N. Central Ave., Ste. 250  
Phoenix, AZ 85004  
(602) 534-2120

Scottsdale City Prosecutor's  
Office  
Victim Assistance Program  
3939 Civic Center Boulevard  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251  
(480) 481-0670

Scottsdale Police Crisis  
Intervention Unit  
3700 N. 75th Street  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251  
(480) 391-5055

Tempe Police Department  
Victim Assistance  
120 E. Fifth Street  
Tempe, AZ 85280  
(480) 950-8011

Victim Rights and Witness  
Assistance  
Arizona Attorney General's Office  
1275 W. Washington  
Phoenix, AZ 85007  
(602) 542-4911

## Legal Services

ACADV Legal Hotline  
(602) 279-2900

Community Legal Services -  
Central  
(602) 258-3434

Community Legal Services - East  
(480) 833-1442

Community Legal Services - West  
(602) 506-7948

Family Lawyers Assistance Project  
101 W. Jefferson  
Phoenix, AZ 85003  
(602) 506-7948

Maricopa County Lawyer Referral  
(602) 257-4434

Maricopa County Superior Court  
SELF-HELP Center  
(602) 506-7353

Phoenix Indian Center-Urban  
Indian Law  
(602) 263-0021

Sojourner  
Legal Advocacy Program  
(602) 258-0373

Tele-Law Tapes  
(602) 254-4099

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## Emergency Orders of Protection

City of Phoenix Family Advocacy Center  
2120 N. Central Ave., Ste. 250  
Phoenix, AZ 85004-1416  
(602) 534-2120

Mesa Center Against Family Violence  
130 N. Robson  
Mesa, AZ 85201-6697  
(480) 644-4075

Glendale Family Advocacy Center  
6829 N. 57th Ave.  
Glendale, AZ 85301  
(623) 930-3720

## Superior Court SELF-HELP Center

Forms/Information Available  
Call for additional information  
(602)506-7353

Superior Court\*\*  
201 W. Jefferson  
Phoenix, AZ 85003

Superior Court\*\*  
222 E. Javelina Ave.  
Mesa, AZ 85252

\*\*These are the courts that issue Orders of Protection for cases involving annulment, divorce, legal separation, paternity, and maternity.

## Substance Abuse Treatment/Counseling

East Valley Addiction Council (EVAC)  
560 S. Bellview, Bldg. 2  
Mesa, AZ 85204-2504  
(480) 962-7711

EMPACT  
1232 E. Broadway Road, Ste.120  
Tempe, AZ 85282-1510  
(480) 784-1514

META Services  
2701 N.16th Street, Ste 316  
Phoenix, AZ 85006-1264  
(602) 650-1212

St. Lukes Behavioral Health  
1800 E. Van Buren Sreet  
Phoenix, AZ 85006-3702  
(602) 251-8535

Value Options  
444 N. 44th Street, Ste. 400  
Phoenix, AZ 8508-4245  
(602) 222-9444

## Crime Victim Compensation

Arizona Criminal Justice Commission  
3737 N. 7th Street, Ste. 260  
Phoenix, AZ 85014  
(602) 230-0252

### What You Need:

☒ **Other Things**

- ☐ Keys to House, Car and Safety Deposit Boxes
- ☐ Medications for You and Your Children
- ☐ Small Objects to Sell
- ☐ Jewelry
- ☐ Address Book
- ☐ Phone Card
- ☐ Pictures of You, Children and Your Abuser
- ☐ Children's Small Toys
- ☐ Toiletries/Diapers
- ☐ Clothing

☒ **To Do**

1. Open a savings account in your own name. Get your own post office box so that you can receive mail and checks.
2. Plan who to stay with or who would be able to lend you money during a crisis.
3. Contact the hotline or any shelter for help in safety planning and keep the hotline number with you at all times.

**When Preparing to Leave**

Provided by:



**and Community Partners:**  
 Arizona Department of Economic Security  
 Association of Arizona Food Banks  
 Arizona Ecumenical Council  
 Maricopa County Task Force Against Domestic Abuse  
 Governor's Office of Domestic Violence Prevention  
 Area Agency on Aging, Region One  
 Maricopa County, City of Phoenix  
 Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
 Valley of the Sun United Way, American Express

**Local Shelters and Support:**  
 Autumn House, Chrysalis, DeColores, Faith House,  
 My Sister's Place, New Life Shelter, Sojourner Center  
 Legal Advocacy Hotline 279-2900  
 Older Adults: 264-HELP (4357)

**KEEP THIS CARD WITH YOU**

**24-Hour Hotlines**

For Local Shelter Call:  
**263-8900 or 1-800-799-7739**  
 National Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

If you are in immediate danger call 911

## Domestic Violence Safety Plan

# Do You Feel Safe at home?



## You can.

For Local Shelter Call:  
**263-8900 or 1-800-799-7739**  
 National Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)



Contact MAG for Safety Plan Brochures:  
(602) 254-6300

### Safety at Home When Abuser is There

- Stay out of rooms with no exit
- Avoid rooms that may have weapons
- Select a code word that alerts friends and children to call police
- Leave suitcase and checklist items with a friend

### When Abuser has Moved Out

- Obtain an Order of Protection
- Change locks on doors and windows
- Insert a peephole in the door
- Change telephone number, screen calls and block caller ID
- Install/increase outside lighting
- Consider getting a dog
- Inform landlord or neighbor of situation and ask that police be called if abuser is seen around the house

### Safety at Work What to Do

- Tell your employer
- Give security a photo of abuser and Order of Protection
- Screen your calls
- Have an escort to your car or bus
- Vary your route home
- Consider a cell phone for your car
- Carry a noisemaker or personal alarm

### Protecting Your Children

- Plan and rehearse an escape route with your children
- If it is safe, teach them a code word to call 911, and how to use a public telephone
- Let school personnel know to whom children can be released
- Give school personnel a photo of abuser
- Warn school personnel not to divulge your address and phone number

### Getting an Order of Protection

- Call 506-SELF (7353) to learn about an Order of Protection and Injunction Against Harassment.
- Call the Police to get an immediate Order of Protection.
- Keep your order with you at ALL times, and give copies to family, friends, schools, employers and babysitters.

**KEEP THIS CARD WITH YOU**  
**Quick List**

- ☐ Identification: Driver's license, birth certificates
- ☐ Money: ATM card, credit cards, checkbooks
- ☐ Legal Papers: Protective order, medical records
- ☐ Important Personal Items: Keys, medicine

Getting Out Now

### What You Need:

☒ **Identification**

- ☐ Driver's License
- ☐ Children's Birth Certificates
- ☐ Your Birth Certificate
- ☐ Social Security Card
- ☐ Welfare Identification
- ☐ Medical Insurance Cards

☒ **Money**

- ☐ Money and/or Credit Cards
- ☐ ATM Card
- ☐ Savings Books
- ☐ Checkbook

☒ **Legal Documents**

- ☐ Lease, Rental Agreement, or Deed to House/Properties
- ☐ Car Registration & Insurance Papers
- ☐ Health and Life Insurance Papers
- ☐ Medical Records for You and Your Children
- ☐ School and Shot Records
- ☐ Work Permits/Green Card or Visa
- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Divorce Papers
- ☐ Custody Papers

**When Preparing to Leave**

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## Safety Plan for Children

When working with a child help them plan to keep themselves safe.

### Keep reminding them:

- The fight is not your fault. Do not try to help!
- Avoid places where you can be trapped or where there is something that can be used as a weapon.
- You can call 9-1-1 from a safe place.
- Take a portable phone with you if possible.
- You can call from a neighbor's house.
- You don't need money to call 9-1-1 from a pay phone.
- Plan where you can go if you need a place to be safe.
- Think about going to a relative who lives close or a friend. Find someone you can trust.

**Above all else—Remember**

**The violence is not your fault!**

### Lethality Assessment

There is no set of predictors of which batterer will potentially kill their victims. The following list will provide some insight as to a batterer's likelihood of escalating the violence until the victim or a bystander is murdered. Some of these indicators are:

1. **Threats of homicide or suicide.** Any threat of violence must be carefully considered. Any ideation of homicide or suicide, especially if there is a plan, also indicates a serious threat.
2. **Access to weapons.** The greater the availability of weapons, the use of weapons in the past or a history of arson all indicates a high potential for great harm.
3. **Depression.** If the batterer is acutely depressed there is greater potential for harm to the victims or themselves.
4. **Alcohol or other drug consumption.**
5. **Obsessiveness about partner or family member.** If the offender says to the victim, "If I can't have you, no one will," this statement indicates a high level of dependence upon the victim.
6. **Pet or other prized possessions being harmed, mutilated or assaulted.**
7. **Rigid beliefs in partner roles.** A batterer with strong stereotypical ideas of relationships will often believe the violence is justified in order to maintain the roles in the family.
8. **Hostage-taking.** If the batterer has threatened to or taken hostages, a high level of risk to the victim must be assumed.
9. **Access to the partner or the family.** If the batterer cannot locate the partner but has access to the children, they may be used as pawns or harmed to bring the victim out of hiding.

Power and Control



Source: Domestic Violence Abuse Intervention Project  
206 W. 4th Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55806, (218) 722-4134

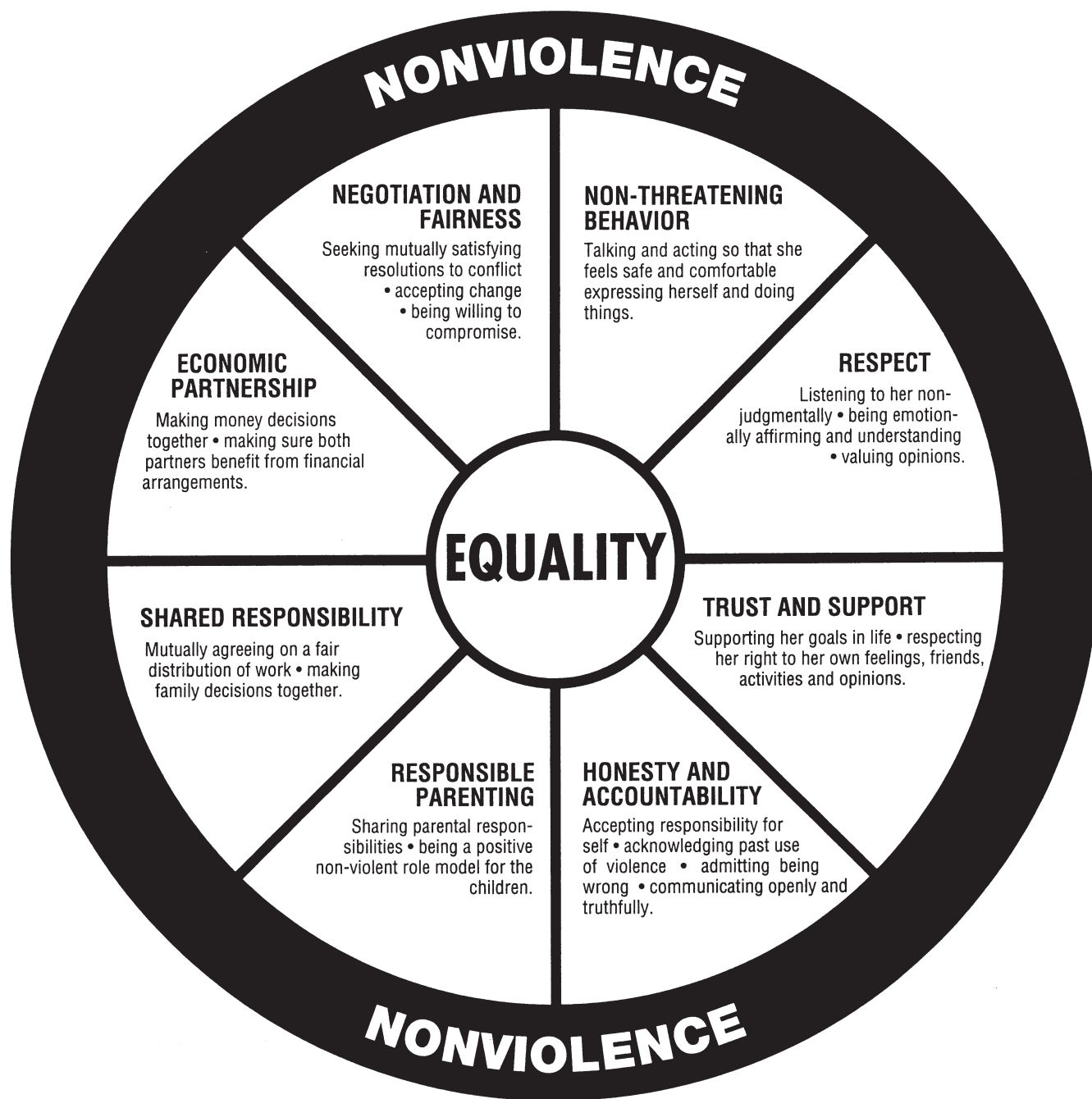
## Power and Control (Spanish Version)



Source: Domestic Violence Abuse Intervention Project

206 W. 4th Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55806, (218) 722-4134

## Equality



Source: *Domestic Violence Abuse Intervention Project*

206 W. 4th Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55806, (218) 722-4134

## Equality (Spanish Version)



Source: Domestic Violence Abuse Intervention Project  
206 W. 4th Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55806, (218) 722-4134

## Abuse of Children



Source: Domestic Violence Abuse Intervention Project

206 W. 4th Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55806, (218) 722-4134

## Nurturing Children



Source: Domestic Violence Abuse Intervention Project

206 W. 4th Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55806, (218) 722-4134

## Community Accountability

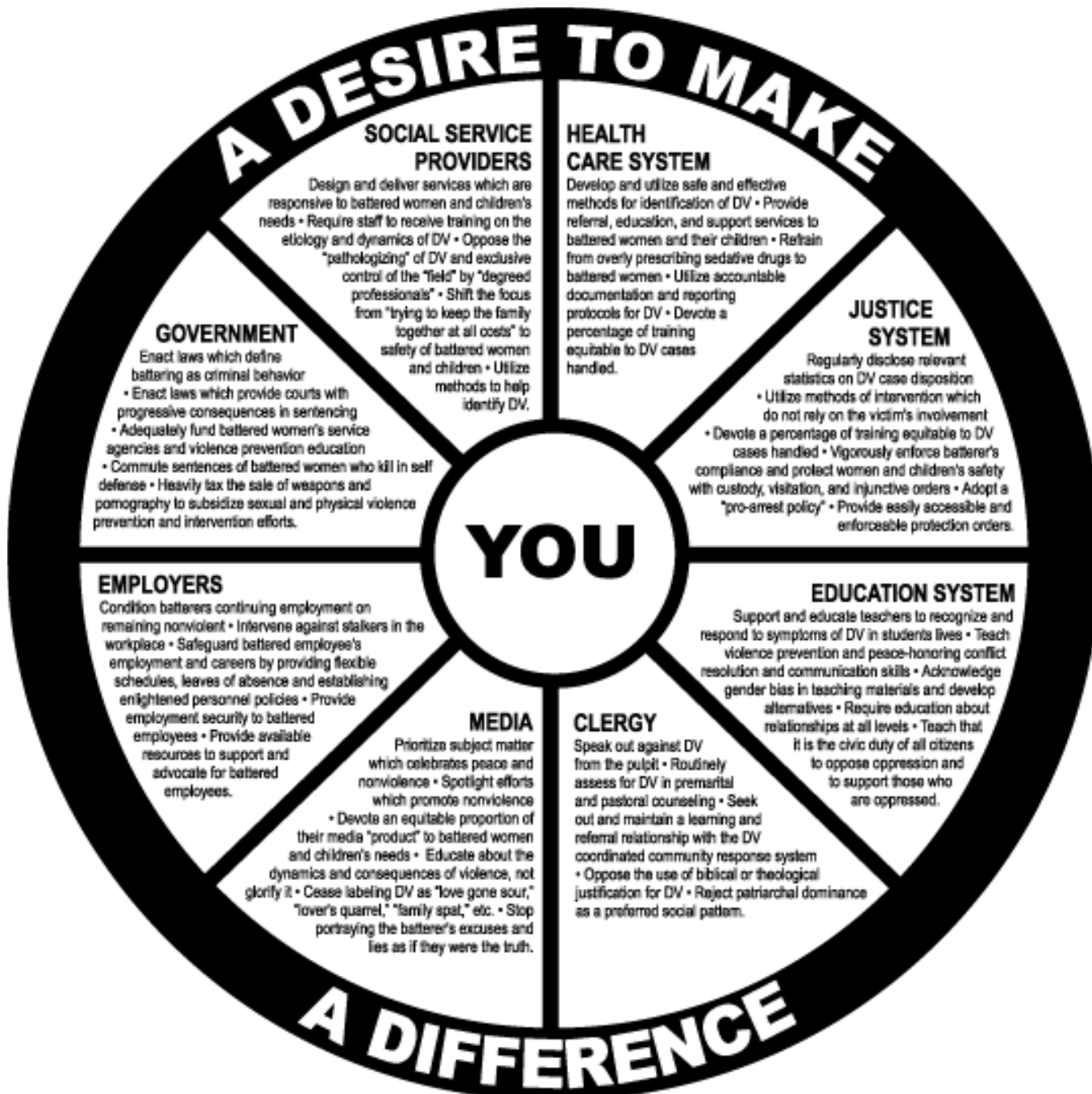


This wheel **begins** to demonstrate the ideal community response to the issue of domestic violence. Community opinion, which strongly states that battering is unacceptable, leads all of our social institutions to expect full accountability from the batterer by applying appropriate consequences.

**Source:** *Texas Council on Family Violence*

8701 N. MoPac Expressway, Ste. 450, Austin, Texas 78759, (512) 794-1133, Fax (512) 794-1199

## Community Action Model

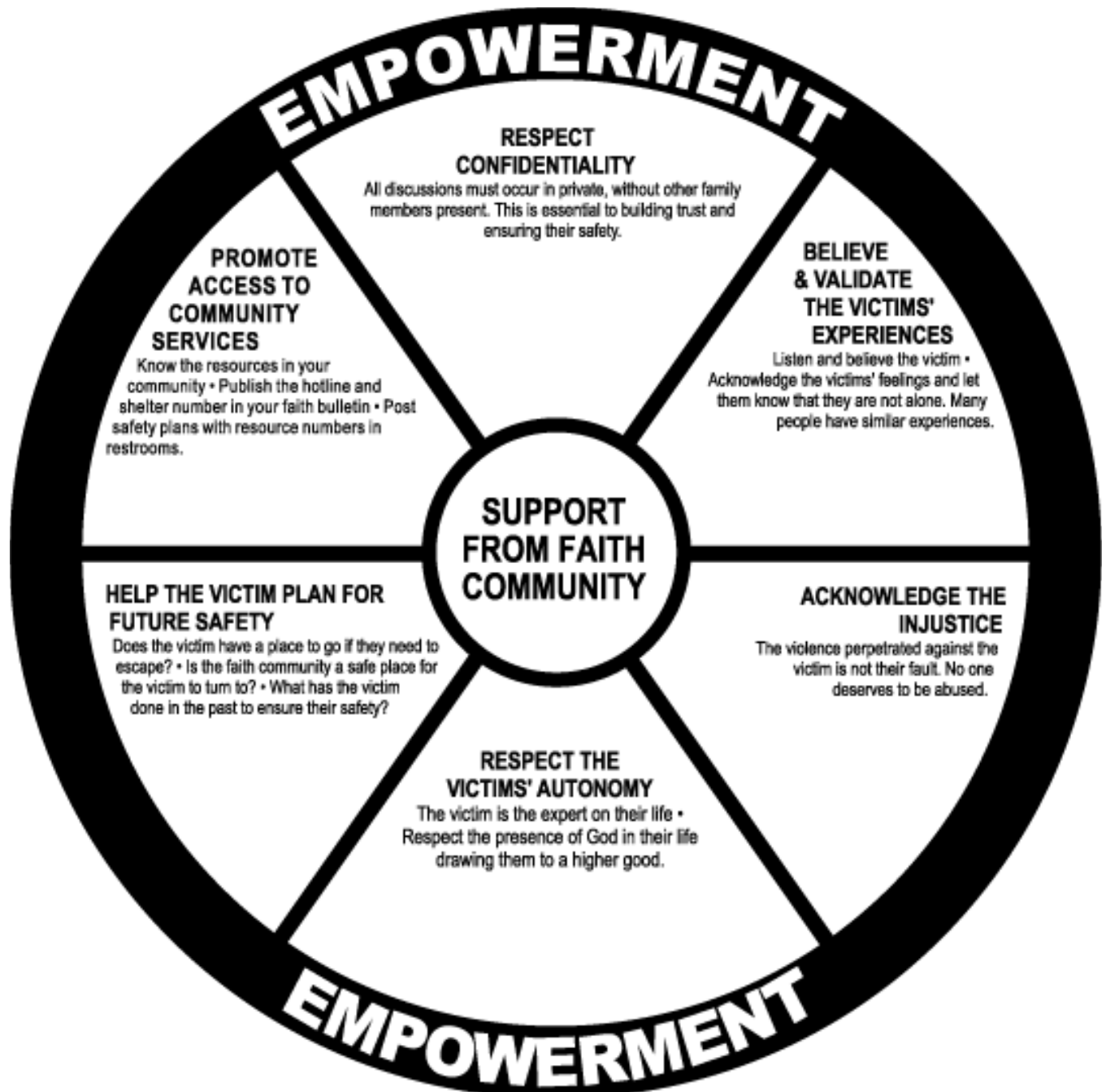


Source: Domestic Violence Institute of Michigan

P.O. Box 130107, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48113-0107, (313) 769-6334

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## Part of the Solution



Source: *Domestic Violence Abuse Intervention Project*  
206 W. 4th Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55806, (218) 722-4134

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# VALUES/PRINCIPLES & AFFIRMATIONS **APPENDIX E**

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## **VALUES AND PRINCIPLES**

- Violence and abuse have no place in the family.
- A strong, vocal public stance against violence in the family is needed.
- Families are the most important social unit in our communities.
- The problem of violence in the family is a social problem, not an isolated, individual problem.
- Preventing violence in the family means addressing the root causes of the problem.
- Education is a primary means of changing the destructive pattern of violence in the family.
- If learning signifies anything, it signifies change—whether in knowledge, attitudes or behavior.
- Sexuality is a very important dimension of every person's life.
- Intervention from the outside, into families where abuse occurs, is often needed to stop the abuse.
- Religious resources can be indispensable for family members who come from a religious background.
- Ultimately, violence in the family is about power and control.
- The sum of all efforts to address violence in the family in religious communities must be justice making.

## **AFFIRMATIONS FOR THE VICTIM**

- You are not alone.
- Violent behavior is never appropriate.
- The abuse you experienced was wrong.
- You deserve a non-violent life.
- You are not responsible for the batterer's behavior.
- You have the right to make choices.
- You can make a better life for you and your children.
- You have the right to be safe.
- You have a right to have friends and to see your family.
- It is possible to reestablish control over your life.

## **AFFIRMATIONS FOR THE BATTERER**

- You have the potential for change.
- You can help yourself. You can begin to change.
- By not stopping this abuse, you may go to jail or lose your family.
- There is a part of you that desires to change for a better life.
- You must ask for help and begin to change.
- Repentance and active change of wrongful behavior brings about the healing of the human spirit.

### In the Image of God

*by Rev. Deborah Lerner*

*(Now pastor at Trinity United Methodist Church, Phoenix, AZ)*

*A Sermon Given October 26, 1999*

*at the 2nd Annual Religious Response to Domestic Violence*

This sermon was written for a Christian congregation and addresses the issues most relevant for this particular faith community. We invite you to consider the issues that would be most relevant in your faith communities.

Our text for today is Genesis 1:26-27.

*Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created humankind in His image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them."*

The author of this creation story makes a bold and audacious claim: that human persons, both male and female, are somehow imprinted with the image of God, so that when someone looks at any one of us, they can see enough of God to be reminded of who God is. That imprint of God on each of us is most clearly recognizable in what we sometimes call our spirit: that constellation of human capacities and potential that includes personality, self determination, and rational thought. We are visible reminders of God because God has created us to be creative; because God has imprinted us with the desire and capacity for relationship; because God has given us initiative and wisdom to care for God's creation. The image of God imprinted on each of us is most readily apparent when we are living into the fullness of these God-given gifts.

That any of us are created in the image of God at all is a great mystery. But because we ARE created in the image of God, every human person is a person of immeasurable dignity and worth, and all human persons are to be deeply respected and valued. We are not to kill other persons, precisely because they are made in the image of God. But we often choose to overlook a different kind of killing: a killing that can leave the human body intact while destroying or distorting the spirit—that very aspect of our being that most resembles the being of God.

The human spirit is delicate and fragile, and when human persons are steadily exposed to abuse of any kind, they can easily forget that God has created them to be creative and to take initiative. They can even forget that they have dignity and worth. The image of God is still deeply imprinted on them, because nothing takes that away from us. But it becomes difficult to see anything of God in their eyes, or in their lives.

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I'm going to tell you the story of a fictional character we'll call Elizabeth. Her story is drawn from the experience of many real women. *(To illustrate this story, have "Elizabeth" come out and sit in a chair at this point. At each of the numbers below, cover her with a different colored layer of nylon net.)* Elizabeth was a devoted Christian, known for her cheerful, helpful nature, her confidence, and her leadership. When she looked in the mirror she saw a clear-eyed face that she liked having: kind, intelligent, open. When you looked at her life, you were reminded of what God was like.

During college Elizabeth met Randy. They were a perfect couple. He treated her like a princess. No one had ever paid so much attention to her. He wanted her to spend every free moment with him.

Elizabeth and Randy were married, and she put off her plan to go on to graduate school and took a low-paying job at a bank so Randy could go to medical school.

Elizabeth came home from work one night and greeted Randy cheerfully. He seemed not to hear her. As the icy silence grew longer, she began to realize that he was angry. Really, really angry. She started to feel a little scared. She waited a long time, and then asked, "Is everything all right? Are you upset about something?" He answered in a cutting tone "Why should I be upset? I should be used to living in a pigpen by now. I'm going somewhere clean to get some food to eat." He left before she could say a word.

Elizabeth was shaken. She talked with her mother about Randy's behavior. Her mother pointed out that if Elizabeth had just been neater, Randy would not have been so angry. Elizabeth began trying very hard to keep things clean and tidy. It never seemed to be enough.

Elizabeth went out for a movie with some women friends after work. When she got home, Randy ignored both her greeting and her presence for a long time. Finally he said, "So where have you BEEN, and what have you been DOING all this time? Who were you WITH?" She was stunned. She had told him that about her plan. She started to explain, but he walked out before she could say a word. She decided she should see her friends only during the workday. Before long, there weren't any friends to see.

Randy changed banks. The new checks did not have her name on them. Randy said, "I'll give you a cash allowance. That way you won't keep spending so much money that we don't have." One week Elizabeth asked for more money to buy a dress. Randy looked at her long and hard. She began to feel that fear building inside again. Then he said, "You don't need a new dress. No one's going to look at somebody like you, anyway."

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Four years and two children later, Elizabeth went to see her pastor. She explained that she never seemed to be able to do anything right. The pastor told her that Randy was under a lot of pressure, and encouraged her to try harder. Together, they looked at Jesus' admonitions against divorce, and prayed for Elizabeth to have a more willing spirit.

Randy told Elizabeth she was doing a lousy job caring for their children. He insisted that she quit her job, so that, perhaps, she could do better.

Elizabeth didn't like looking in the mirror anymore. All she saw there was an exhausted, defeated woman who never got anything right. It had become very difficult to discern anything about what God was like by looking at her life. She was certainly still made in the image of God, but that image had become obscured and shadowy.

Then, Elizabeth remembered an experience she'd had on a retreat. *(If you are dramatizing this story, remove one layer of nylon net at each of the numbers below)* The participants held hands and sang together, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." She had felt deeply loved by that group, and by God.

Elizabeth read an article in the church newsletter about abuse. It said that not all abuse was physical, but that all abuse, in any form, violated God's law of love.

Elizabeth read an article in *Ladies Home Journal* about a woman who had been verbally and emotionally abused. Until then, she had felt like the only one in the world.

Elizabeth went in to see her new pastor. The pastor explained that Jesus' words about divorce were probably directed at men, who had the right to divorce at will, and that they were probably intended to protect women. The pastor said abuse violated the covenant of marriage. She said, "You deserve to be treated with respect and love."

Elizabeth read in her Bible, "For it was you who formed my inward parts, you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139)

Elizabeth ran into a woman from the church at the grocery store. The woman told her she was in the process of a divorce. She said she couldn't live in fear anymore.

Elizabeth walked into the living room, and found Randy leaning over their two-year old daughter saying, "I can't believe how stupid you are. You never

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learn anything, do you? If you leave these toys out one more time I'm going to break them all and throw them all away!." She knew she couldn't let it happen anymore. She had to protect her children.

It was a long time before Elizabeth looked in a mirror again. When she did, she was startled. Looking back at her was a woman full of determination and courage and hope.

Elizabeth, remember that you are a precious child of God, made in the very image of God. Nothing you can ever do, and nothing that can ever be done to you, can ever take that away from you. Go in peace.

What happened to Elizabeth? Like most of us, she had expected her partner to love and cherish and support her. She felt she must be doing something terribly wrong to deserve Randy's anger. Over time she experienced successively an uncertainty about how she was coming across, an inclination to soul-searching and reviewing incidents with the hope of determining what went wrong; a loss of self-confidence; a growing self-doubt, a hesitancy to accept her own perceptions; a prepared, on-guard state, and a fervent desire not to be the way she was.

The joy and vitality had gone completely out of her life. And he had never, ever hit her. Not even one time.

You may be thinking, "But surely she did something to provoke his anger. Couldn't some of it have been her fault, somehow? The answer may surprise you: NO! Whether or not she was a good wife, housekeeper, or mother; or spent more than she should; or stayed out too late too often, Elizabeth was NOT to blame for Randy's abuse. He might have let her know that his needs were not being met, or that he needed a change. He might even have said, loudly, "I am SO ANGRY with you!"

What he did instead was ignore her, criticize her, minimize her concerns, humiliate her, isolate her, and withhold money from her. He did all those things to gain power and control over her. It's crucial to realize that he never lost his temper and lost control. In fact, he was always very tightly IN control. That's the way it is, with most abusers, most of the time.

What Randy did was absolutely wrong. Abuse in any form is absolutely wrong, because it aims to kill the spirit, to annihilate that image of God that is imprinted upon us.

She didn't have to stay, did she? WHY did she stay? Because our culture had taught her that her job was to please her husband, and she was deeply ashamed at her inability to do it. Because the church had told her it would

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be an unpardonable sin to break up a marriage. Because there were children depending on her, and her ability to find a good job had deteriorated.

It might have turned out very differently if Elizabeth had started out understanding that in every relationship there are not only responsibilities but rights. EVERY person is made in the image of God, and EVERY person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. Each has the right to goodwill and emotional support in a relationship. Each has the right to be heard and to be responded to with courtesy. Each has the right to have their own view, and to have that view, and their feelings and experience acknowledged as real. Each has the right to live free from accusation, blame, criticism, and judgment. Each has the right to encouragement, and freedom from emotional and physical threat.

You and I and every other human person on this earth are made in the very image of God. We carry in our spirits a mysterious, holy resemblance to the one who created us in love, and because of that we each deserve to be respected and valued and loved. And no one should ever try to take that away from us or anyone else.

Amen.

Permission is granted to use this sermon, with acknowledgement, for the prevention of domestic violence.

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## **"It Was Very Good"**

*A sermon based on Genesis 1:26-31*

*Given At Paradise Valley UMC by Rev. Deborah Lerner*

*Sunday October 18, 1998 - Domestic Violence Awareness Sunday*

*(And at El Pedregal—Carefree Worship Sunday November 8, 1998, and Trinity UMC 10-8-00)*

If I asked you to tell the story of how God created human persons, you probably would tell me the story contained in the second chapter of Genesis—how God created the first man from the dust of the earth, and then kept trying to make a suitable companion for him, creating all the animals that inhabit the earth in the process. Finally, God put the man to sleep, took a rib from his side, and created a helpmate and companion: the first woman. It's a wonderful story. But there IS another story of Creation in the first chapter of Genesis, and it is very different. You've just heard the end of that story, where God creates humankind in God's own image: male and female together, at the same time, and both in the image of God. And God saw everything that God had made, including men AND women, and indeed it was very good. It's important for women, especially, to know this story.

It is also important for women, and all who love them, to realize that even though our Scriptures were recorded by men, about men, and for men because of the culture of their times, the New Testament, and the story of Jesus, is filled with good news for women. In all of the Gospel accounts, women have very important roles. They are the first to behold the empty tomb, and the first ones to tell the others that Jesus was no longer there. In fact, in Luke, the men dismissed the news as an idle tale. In Matthew and John, it is women who first meet the risen Christ. Jesus consistently stood for and with women in powerful ways, in spite of the powerful cultural bias against them. No self-respecting man would talk long with a woman, but Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well is the longest conversation of his that we have on record. On her own initiative she spreads the word about him to others, asking, "He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" Elsewhere in John's gospel, it is a woman, Martha, who first believes and declares that Jesus IS the Messiah, the Son of God.

It's important to notice these things about women for many reasons. Today I want you to notice them particularly because if you ask an expert on domestic violence "What is the most common characteristic of a batterer," they will answer, "they are male." If you ask what the most common characteristic of a VICTIM of domestic violence is, the answer will be: "they are female." If men and women were BOTH created in the image of God; if Jesus valued women as important and precious children of God, then why do so many

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faithful people of both genders believe that men have the right to control the significant women in their lives by whatever means is necessary, including physical violence?

*I'd like to tell you a story about one woman named Janet. **Victim comes forward and sits in chair at front of chancel.** Janet is 35 years old. She has been married for sixteen years. She grew up in the church and is a committed Christian. She has four children ages seven to 15. When Janet was a child, she saw her father hit her mother. He did it once or twice a week. Several times, Janet recalls, her mother had to go to the hospital. **Put a blanket over Janet.***

Children in homes where domestic violence occurs often suffer lasting emotional effects, including taking responsibility for the abuse themselves; constant anxiety that another beating will occur; guilt for not being able to stop the abuse or for loving the abuser; and fear of abandonment. They suffer physical abuse or neglect at a rate 1500 percent higher than the general population.

*When Janet was in high school, her pastor taught a course for the church youth group on marriage. He strongly emphasized that all marriages should be forever, that marriage was sacred. **Put a blanket over Janet.***

The teachings on divorce in the New Testament are VERY explicit and VERY demanding. We are expected to take our marriages VERY seriously. But it is also important to realize that Jesus' teachings about divorce were based on a culture where women were not valued very highly. Men at that time could divorce their wives at the drop of a hat. The women would then have no place in the community. Many would have to turn to prostitution. Women, on the other hand, had few grounds for asking for divorce. So Jesus was almost certainly talking mostly to men, and his intention was almost certainly to protect women from the practices of the prevailing culture.

*Janet quit school in her second year of college in order to marry Bob. He had a good job, and he didn't want her to have to work outside the home. **Put a blanket over Janet.***

Bob's intentions may have been quite benevolent. He may have had Janet's best interests at heart. But if Janet and Bob are in a truly mutual, covenant relationship—the kind of relationship called for in Ephesians 5:21, which admonishes, “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ,” then EACH partner has the right to participate in decisions about who works, and who doesn't. The roles that men and women take in their relationships, including marriage, should be agreed upon together, not assigned by one partner to the other. Treating a woman as less than a partner in status or decision making de-humanizes and de-values her. You may find this surprising, but it is a form of abuse. Using isolation to exert power and control is also a form of abuse.

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*Bob began physically abusing Janet the first year of their marriage when she was pregnant. She threatened to leave. He told her to forget it, saying that no one else would have her. She nearly lost the baby. **Put a blanket over Janet.***

The covenant of marriage is mutual. What we promise in the marriage vows is to love, to comfort, to honor, and to be faithful. If one partner is abusing the other, in any way, the abuser has already violated that covenant. It is very clear in both the Jewish and Christian traditions that God does not expect any of God's precious children to unwillingly submit to violence at the hands of another person—whether or not they are married.

We need to recognize that it is not divorce that is breaking up families in violent homes. What's breaking up families in violent homes is violence and abuse. Divorce is often the painful, public acknowledgment of an already accomplished fact.

*Five years and two children later, Janet went to her mother for help. Her mother said that this was just the way marriage was: it was her cross to bear and she had to accept it. **Put a blanket over Janet.***

Janet's mother was probably very familiar with Ephesians 5:22-23: "Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the savior." She probably had not heard much about Ephesians 5:21, "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." She may not have realized that Ephesians 5:25 admonishes: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her," and that Ephesians 5:28-29 declares: "husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church." And how DOES Christ love the church? Not by ruling from on high; not by exerting power and control to manipulate, not through violence or abuse, but by invitation and serving. Remember him washing the feet of his disciples? Remember how he gave himself on their behalf even unto his own death, rather than becoming violent even against his captors?

If we look at the whole text of Ephesians 5:21-33, we will find nine verses directed toward the husbands' responsibilities to the family, only three that refer to wives' responsibilities, and one verse that refers to both. Which ones do we remember most?

*Janet thought about going to her minister. But her minister knew and respected Bob, who was an active lay leader in their church. She didn't think her minister would believe her stories of beatings, humiliations, and rapes. **Put a blanket over Janet.***

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I hate to admit it, but Janet was probably right. In 1988, 5,700 questionnaires about domestic abuse were sent out to Protestant pastors in the United States and Canada. Only 10 percent were returned, indicating a profound lack of interest in the subject. Fully one-third of the responding pastors questioned the reliability of abused women's reporting, especially with regard to responsibility for the violence. 26 percent felt the wife should submit to the husband and trust God to honor this action by stopping the violence or strengthening the wife so she could endure it. 92 percent would NEVER advise divorce under any circumstance. This response was given in a culture in which the most conservative estimates indicate that 1 in 3 or 4 wives are beaten by their husbands, and women die at the hands of their mates every single day. In another study in 1992, clergy responded to two case studies. 43 percent of those responding made victim-blaming statements, including. "She needs to deal with the sin in her life." "She must learn her scriptural obligations in the home." "Carol should first of all accept her responsibility as a wife...she should lovingly confront her husband with his abuse problem."

What these clergy did not know was that Carol's case was a real case, and Carol eventually died as a result of the battering.

*Janet left once and went to stay with her best friend. Bob found her and told her that he had a gun. He said that he would use it if he had to. **Put a blanket over Janet.***

Intimidation, coercion, and threats are all designed to exercise power and control over another human person. So are using children, using economic or emotional abuse, minimizing, denying and blaming. They are ALL forms of abuse.

*Janet, why do you put up with this? Why don't you just leave him? **Victim tries to respond by attempting to move but cannot get up because of blankets.***

One woman sent me her story, in case it could help someone else. She wrote: "After supporting myself across two continents, I married at 26. We had been married six weeks when he hit me the first time. I stared in shock and told him I'd be out of his life if he ever hit me again. I remember thinking about how, in college, we gals said if any man ever hit us, we'd walk out and never go back, and I wondered why I didn't. I don't recall the details of the next time he hit me. Or the next. Or the next 13 years."

There are many reasons why it is hard for women to leave abusive situations. First of all, it's dangerous—the time of leaving is when battered women often lose their lives. There may be no place for her to go—in Arizona, our shelters are full most of the time. A woman may feel it is her duty to keep the marriage together. Sometimes women hold it together for their children. There are

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almost always daunting economic considerations. In spite of these difficulties, many brave women do seek help, and many brave women eventually do leave. On average, women leave 5-7 times before they are able to finally make it. It isn't easy.

**And then:**

*Janet remembered that her ninth grade Sunday school teacher taught her that she was a child of God, and that God cared about her. **Remove a blanket.***

*Janet read in the paper about a new law that said that husbands could be arrested for beating their wives. **Remove a blanket.***

*Janet read a story in Good Housekeeping about a battered woman who was her age. Until then, she had thought she was the only one. Then she remembered that Mrs. Jackson, the mother of her best friend in high school, had divorced her husband and moved away. Janet knew that her friend's father had been abusive. **Remove a blanket.***

*Janet read in her Bible: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple (1 Cor 3:16-17). **Remove a blanket.***

*Janet saw an ad in a newspaper for a shelter for battered women. She realized that there was a place where she could go to be safe. **Remove a blanket.***

*Janet read in the church bulletin that there was to be a presentation at her church about battered women. She was afraid to go, but she thought that maybe this meant that her pastor would be willing to help her. It gave her hope. **Remove a blanket.***

*Bob hit their son and threw him across the room. Janet decided that she could not let her children be hurt any more. She knew that she had to protect them. **Remove a blanket.** Janet, remembering "for freedom, Christ has set you free." Go in peace. (Victim leaves chancel area)*

If you have recognized yourself anywhere in this sermon, you need to know that help is available for you. In your bulletin you will find an insert for safety planning to get you started. If you have a friend that you think may be suffering abuse, show it to them sometime when it is safe, and tell them you will stand by them as they seek safety and hope.

If you are an abuser of any kind, you and you alone are responsible for your behavior. It is not your mate's responsibility. Domestic violence violates God's good intentions for all of God's children. It is against everything Jesus ever taught. It is also against the law. Help is available to help you change your behavior patterns.

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If you are suffering abuse of any kind, know that it is not your fault. You are not in any way responsible. Nothing you could ever say or do deserves a violent or abusive response. Violence and abuse are a choice made by the abuser, who must take responsibility for his actions.

God is not sending you this violence. God wants wholeness and abundance of life for all people, including you. That's why God gave us the gift of abundant life through Jesus Christ.

You were created in the very image of God. You are a precious child of God. You deserve freedom and joy as much as any other human person, and God is moving in your life to bring you liberation and joy. Do not give up hope—help is available here and in our community.

Susan Thistlethwaite proposes a new way for abused persons to think of themselves. I hope you will try it on for size:

“You have both the freedom and the responsibility to care about yourself. You have the right to think and feel and make choices and changes. Consider thinking about yourself in new ways:

I am not to blame for being beaten and abused.  
I am not the cause of another's violent behavior.  
I do not like it or want it.  
I am an important human being.  
I am a worthwhile woman.  
I deserve to be treated with respect.  
I do have power over my own life.  
I deserve to make my own life safe and happy.

May it be so. May it be so.  
Amen

Permission is given to use this sermon, with acknowledgement, for the purpose of preventing domestic violence.

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## Conservative Sermon

*By Rabbi Leonard Gordon*

*Rabbi Leonard Gordon is the rabbi for the Germantown Jewish Centre (PA). The sermon was given on Rosh Hashanah 5756 (September 25, 1995). Rabbi Gordon acknowledges Dr. Lori Lefkowitz, Director of the Center for Jewish Women's Studies at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, for her scholarship and assistance in the writing of this sermon.*

### SHANAH TOVAH

The stories of the Rosh Hashanah Torah readings are among the most familiar of all stories to us. We read the narratives of Abraham and Sarah, the first Hebrews, the founding patriarch and matriarch of our people to whom were given the promise of future descendants as numerous as the grains of sand on the beach and the stars in the heavens. We recognize that each of us is one grain promised by God, a single star in the vast panorama that stretches forth from God's scriptural promise long ago to the present and, we hope, well into a future that will fan out and include in its sweep many future generations of our children's children and the children of those who cast their fates with our people.

We acknowledge Abraham and Sarah as the first grandparents of our people, and we know intimately a number of intimate stories about them. We know about Sarah's legendary beauty and her barrenness, the birth of Ishmael to the servant Hagar, the late conception of Isaac, the laughter associated with the promise of his birth and arrival; we know that there was a weaning ceremony, that Ishmael and Hagar were expelled when Sarah saw Ishmael playing with Isaac, that Ishmael's life was saved, and that he too received a promise. We know about Isaac's narrow escape from sacrifice, Abraham's exemplary obedience, Sarah's death and the purchase of a tomb for her, and we know that Isaac loved his wife Rebekah and that she comforted him after the loss of his beloved mother.

This suggestive sketch omits a number of details provided by the Biblical author, and many of us have read into those details a rather complete picture of the family life and the complex of relationships among these important members of our collective family. I suspect that we know so much about this family, and speculate even further, for a number of important reasons. The stories of our ancestors have a particular hold on us and play a role in our self identity; children often are held rapt by stories of their grandparents' youth; they take pride in their greatness and search for lines of connection to their parents and themselves; they emulate rebels and free thinkers and construct family traits, a family identity of which to be proud. These stories

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also command our attention because they are dramatically suggestive; the imagination is gripped in a primal way when we hear of a father lifting a knife over the neck of a beloved son. And we fantasize about these characters too, I suspect, because they are the characteristics whose stories happen to fall out on Rosh Hashanah when so many of us come to shul, year after year the rabbi has to come up with something else to say about the household of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac. Every lesson that any rabbi has wanted to preach to a full house has been eked out of the events that we know about this particular family. And perhaps for the same reasons, because these are profoundly suggestive tales of our most widely known relatives, these stories have inspired, through the generations, an enormous amount of commentary and moralizing.

For the next few minutes, I would like to share with you a glimpse of some of the different understandings of the first Hebrew family and trace some implications of those retellings for ourselves and our families. What I want to show you is how much of what we think we know about the families of our biblical heroes are an expression of our love and admiration, and while we think we know a great deal about Abraham and Sarah's life - just as we imagine we know much about the families of our more immediate ancestors, our friends and neighbors - we often shy away from indications of disturbing situations by creating for ourselves stories with happy endings. I want to show both how hard we have worked to explain and forgive the disturbing events in the lives of our ancestors, and how impossible it is for us to really understand and explain with certainty why people in families do the things they do. After I briefly take you through a history of interpretations of these ancient stories, I want to draw some specific lessons for our own present day Jewish community about the myth of the Jewish family and the importance of loving each other in spite of our bizarre behaviors—the importance of acknowledging the possibility of cruelty. I want to offer a definition of High Holy Day forgiveness that requires openness to seeing some unforgivable sins and requires concrete follow up to Teshuvah or repentance in the form of renouncing self-righteous naivety or taking hold of ourselves and getting the help that we may need to make truly painful, difficult, and life-transforming changes. Through a history of readings of our patriarchy and matriarchy, I want to speak on the painful subject of family secrets.

I remember well having been taught that Abraham was a devoted husband and father. He was characterized by his sensitivity, which is why the test of the binding of Isaac is so poignant. We were taught in Hebrew School how to understand his reluctance to part with Ishmael; it was a weakness, an inability to punish his eldest child's wildness, and that is why God had to command him to listen to Sarah when she, for the sake of her beloved Isaac, insisted that the bad influence be removed.

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In this reading we were asked to imagine a self important Hagar, a juvenile delinquent Ishmael, a pious Isaac, a weak doting father, and a classic Jewish mother going to any lengths to protect her child. The rabbis of the Middle Ages, the authors of rabbinic Midrash, paid a good deal of attention to the question of why Sarah found it necessary to banish Abraham's first son: perhaps she was simply inappropriately jealous. But the Bible specifies that God told Abraham to "listen to Sarah," implying that God agreed with Sarah. What was Ishmael's crime? Sarah, we are told, saw Ishmael "playing" with Isaac. Isaac's name, you recall, is "Yitzchak," and to play in Hebrew is "litzachak." The way the text reads, therefore, offers a play on words that we might translate as "Ishmael was isaacing Isaac." One rabbi suggests that the older boy was mocking the younger; another midrashist offers the idea that he was pretending to be, playing the role of, Isaac, and when Sarah saw this not-so-innocent game she read into it "usurpation" of Isaac's role, a gross ambition to be Isaac, inheritor of the promise. And still another medieval commentator reads into this phrase "isaacing Isaac" a much more insidious crime, a crime so abhorrent that any mother would have had no choice but to remove the abusive older half-sibling.

The familiar stories of the Rosh Hashanah Torah readings raise many other questions about motivations, relationships, the behind-the-scenes, the before and after of the scenes that we see. What kind of relationship did Hagar have with Sarah? Did Sarah banish her servant reluctantly or eagerly? Did Abraham have feelings for the woman? Did Sarah know that Abraham took Isaac to be sacrificed? Is that why she dies in the very next chapter? Did she and Abraham argue over his obedience? When Isaac realized that his father planned to sacrifice him, did he admire Abraham's godliness or did the child hate his father thereafter? In the story it implies that father and son did not walk home together. One rabbi explains that Isaac went off to study in the Yeshiva, and another supposes that Isaac was not equal to accompanying a father who came so close to slitting his throat.

A number of contemporary poets have written beautiful speculative midrashim about this first family, poems that invite us to think in fresh ways about the stories and also, of course, to think about our relationship to these characters and to ourselves and the people in our own lives. Elinor Wilner's poem "Sarah's Choice," imagines God first asking Sarah to sacrifice Isaac. She goes to her child and tells him what she knows, ending with the words, "You can be chosen or you can choose. Not both." "But mother," Isaac replies, "'if we were not God's chosen people, what then should we be? I am afraid of being nothing.' And Sarah laughed." Sarah says that she is going to find Hagar whom Sarah had cast out "drunk" on her own "pride," and Isaac wonders how to greet Ishmael. Sarah prophetically tells the boy to greet him as he greets his image in the well, "You must know your brother now, or you will see your own face looking back the day you're at each other's throats. Sarah has

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a conversation with God that the poem tells us “the Bible does not record,” and she concludes: “‘No,’ said Sarah to the Voice. ‘I will not be chosen. Nor shall my son—if I can help it. You have promised Abraham, through this boy, a great nation. So either this sacrifice is a sham, or else it is a sin. Shame,’ she said, for such is the presumption of mothers, ‘for thinking me a fool for asking such a thing. You must have known I would choose Isaac. What use have I for History?’” Sarah goes to Isaac and tells him to choose. He asks his mother what will happen if he goes with her, and she replies that she doesn’t know, “‘But it is written what will happen if you stay.’”

In contrast, Diana Hume Georges poem, “Sarah’s Wrath,” imagines a more violent domestic scene; Sarah yells at Abraham: “Miserable toad! You would have done it!” After many lines she concludes, “Don’t you know you would have killed me too? But not before I would kill you and will yet, old man, if ever again you raise your bloody bones against my son.” This Sarah speaks as a parent who defends a vulnerable child against the power of a second parent.

In the first poem, “Sarah’s Choice,” God’s intimacy with Sarah is extended to the sacrifice itself, she is offered the first opportunity to be tested before Abraham himself, but she declines, regrets having banished Hagar, and asks Isaac to come with her and find them, thereby allowing him to avoid the trip with Abraham. Isaac, meeker than his mother, chooses to go with his father, and therefore gives us history as we know it. “Sarah’s Wrath,” by contrast, confronts with grim honesty the violence of the sacrifice of Isaac in the Bible, and we see a marriage that has turned bitter in which the aged mother swears that she will kill her abusive husband if he ever again raises his hand against her child.

The shift in attitudes between the medieval rabbis and contemporary readers reflects an important change in our self-perception. According to the rabbis, we have the story—of a beautiful wife who gives her husband a servant lover, an aged couple who have a child late in life; a father who almost kills that child; a blended family that breaks up and causes conflict all around: between mothers, brothers, husband and wife. As the rabbis filled in the gaps in the stories there is a selective whitewash: all is ultimately for the good, part of the divine plan; our ancestors, Abraham and Sarah always acted according to divine will, always lovingly and appropriately. The baby did not put undue stress on the relationship. Sarah’s sending Ishmael away did not cause permanent resentment that drove Abraham over the edge. They never asked by what right a father can lay violent hands upon his child. It would have been one thing if God had told the patriarch to sacrifice himself, but are you supposed to listen, even to God, when he demands your child? What is a parent’s right?

The contemporary readers see in their family history a less romanticized ancestry: they admire the greatness of the heroes of our tradition, our

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great-great-great-grandparents, but they see too that the Bible represents some disturbing and very human responses. Noah suffers survivor guilt and drinks too much wine. Fathers and daughters have troubling relations; sisters may envy each other to the point of disaster, and near disasters are sometimes averted. And still this is our Jewish family heritage.

One lesson I draw from the very wide-ranging and various responses to the stories of Rosh Hashanah is that we want to understand the private lives of our ancestors, to speculate about how one thing led to another, and to learn from how these heroes responded when faced with major challenges. But the second lesson that I learn from this variety is that much as we may speculate, we cannot know, of course we cannot know, what went on, what goes on, behind closed doors in any family.

While the contemporary poems are more psychologically probing than many of the rabbinic midrashim, they are not always grimmer. The rabbis imagine the possibility of terrible shameful things among these characters; they simply never allow that we could have been the agents of these crimes. Ishmael might have harmed Isaac, but they do not allow that Sarah may have unjustly treated Hagar or that Abraham may have been a stressed, overwhelmed, too old and therefore violent father even in a story where we see him poise a blade over the neck of his boy.

I do not wish to urge the negative readings on us. I admire Sarah. I feel in my heart, and from the lessons of my youth, that God meant her to expel Hagar and Ishmael to go on to their own great destiny. But I want us to recognize that we do not know and that whatever happened within those tents in the desert, these are still our patriarchs and matriarchs, and we are not diminished by an honest look at the range of their life possibilities. Because we have been shy to confront such possibilities among Jews, in the larger Jewish family, we have long denied that domestic violence, sexual misconduct, child abuse, and drug and alcohol abuse occur in Jewish families. The consequences for such denial have been tragic.

These things sadly occur in all kinds of homes, in the homes of great people, and in the homes of people of high communal standing. When we cannot believe it, when we act scandalized or behave naively, we make it harder, if not nearly impossible, for people to seek help. The shame is too great; the feeling of isolation too complete. Jewish women shun hotlines and shelters and remain in abusive relationships seven years longer than non-Jewish women.

Domestic violence of all sorts does exist in Jewish families. And I am speaking on this subject today because I have been asked to give a major High Holiday address on the subject of abuse in Jewish families as part of a national effort to remedy this very serious, painful Jewish problem. The national effort is

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designed to end the history of denial so that mechanisms which provide for help can succeed. The Germantown Jewish Centre is a pilot site for a lifesaving program called Shomerit Shalom Bayit, "Guardian of Domestic Peace." Shalom Bayit, peace in the family, is a supreme value in Judaism. For the sake of preserving such peace, we are even permitted to break certain halachot. This program is designed especially to meet the needs of Jewish family members who need help, and in coming weeks and months you will be hearing more about these programs, how you can help, and how you can seek help.

There are many people in this room today. I do not know, and you do not know each other, no matter how close you may feel you are to your friends or neighbors, any more than we know the intimate details about the lives of Sarah and Abraham, their children, and their servants. And certainly we should not be inappropriately suspicious. But neither do we dare be inappropriately naive or judgmental. If you speak out too judgmentally, the friend who may wish to confide in you may bite her tongue and suffer longer in silence. You yourself may be a victim, of a spouse, a parent, a relative, and have been made to feel, unjustly, that your Jewish family is unique, others are healthy, no one can be approached with your shame or pain, and there are no resources that can help you without destroying everything you love and value.

The truth is that no one in any situation is in a unique situation, and there are places to go, people trained to help, services that are discrete and effective. Everyone despairs, and all of us, to some extent, are self-deceivers about the strengths and weaknesses of our own families and their members. Families have secrets, but some of those secrets cannot be suffered to go untreated.

In planning to speak on so delicate a subject as this on Rosh Hashanah, I struggled with the assignment. The longer I struggled, the more I realized that perhaps there is no message more important for a Holy Day that commands us to forgive each other and ourselves and to make a new beginning, to work to live a healthy life. But the magic formula of Rosh Hashanah, the message of prayer and repentance to avert the severity of life's pains, can be tragically deceiving if we make the mistake of thinking that Teshuvah is merely a matter of will and a contrite heart.

We know the psychological cliches: we know that change **does not** come easily, and that the grievances of our own early childhoods cannot be remedied by mere acts of will. We know humanity's endless ability to not see the crimes we commit. The Ashamnu and Al Hayt prayers list sins that stick in our craw: we cannot believe that we are asking forgiveness for sins that most of us would never imagine are committed in our own community or are committed by our very selves. But the motivations of individuals are complex, and it is dif-

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difficult to exert control over our impulses. Abraham may well have hated himself as he lifted the knife, and he may have regretted it a moment later; every parent knows this feeling. Who has not frightened their child with a voice that was inappropriately loud, uttered a threat you wished you could retract, said or done some act, however small, that compromises the self esteem of someone who trusts you and will later show in some small way in the child's character.

Prayer and a commitment to Teshuvah, to self-recognition, in a glimpse however small, is the first tiny step of Rosh Hashanah. But Teshuvah occurs only if you hold the self-recognition tightly and take it with you to seek the help that you may need for yourself or for someone dear to you. The injunction of Rosh Hashanah is to forgive, so be open to the possibility that Jews too are sinners, and be prepared then to forgive what you may have thought was unforgivable. Naivete is a sin that stands in the way of Teshuvah. You will hear from us. Please do Teshuvah, allow yourself to turn around, allow for a new beginning by seeking help, and by being available by the openness of your heart to be helpful.

I wish you all a Shanah Tovah, a blessed year in which God grants us strength to endure and persevere, and create a world rich in the greatest blessings that life has to offer: long years, health, naches, dreams fulfilled, prosperity, serenity, and peace so that we may be free to labor in the repair of our broken world and deserve this great gift of God's creation, our earth, and each other. May we always know how to love and be loved, and may the work of our hands be blessed and be for a blessing.

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## Orthodox Sermon

*By Rabbi Yitzchok Breitowitz*

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For many years, the Jewish community indulged in the comfortable illusion that we were immune from the evils which plagued society at large. Yet we have discovered that while Jewish values can indeed create structures that support nurturing, compassionate behaviors, and discourage destructive ones, there are no guarantees. Alcoholism, drug addiction, incest, and spousal abuse do, to our everlasting sorrow, exist in our families and we need to acknowledge that fact openly and honestly. For too long, victims of abuse have been ashamed to seek help, thinking that because “good” Jewish families don’t have such problems, they themselves must be at fault.

Let me begin with the obvious: the teachings of Judaism unequivocally repudiate and condemn the use of violence, verbal or physical, directed towards anyone (except in the narrow contexts of war, selfdefense, or preservation of the public order). Jewish law prohibits even raising a hand to strike another: “He who lifts his hand to strike another is termed evil” (Talmud Sanhedrin 58). The Jewish tradition places great emphasis on the need to control anger, particularly where that anger can lead to violence: “He who breaks objects in his fury is as if he worshipped other gods” (Talmud). Our rabbis have always recognized that when we become angry, we lose control of our rational selves and become, at least for the moment, a wild beast incapable of controlling the rage within. And thus, the rabbis reiterated again and again the paramount virtues of self-mastery and impulse control.

All of this is true with respect to how we relate to anyone—our neighbors, colleagues, etc. With respect to our spouses and children, the obligations are ever so greater; Jewish law specifically requires that we not create an atmosphere of excessive fear in the home and that we address our families in a quiet, gentle way (Talmud Gittin 6). Husbands are under special directive “not to bring tears” to one’s wife (Talmud Baba Metzia 59) and to “love her as oneself and honor her more than oneself” (Talmud Yevamot 62). Even at a time when wife beating was a common, accepted, and legal practice in both Christian and Moslem Europe, it was a grievous sin for Jewish men to treat their wives in such a manner. (See Shulchan Aruch Even Ha’Ezer 154:2 [statement of Rabbi Moshe Isserles, prominent authority on Ashkenazie Jewry]).

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The traditions of Judaism properly observed can undoubtedly inculcate many virtues that counter abusive behaviors.”

1. Control of anger.
2. Deferred gratification.
3. Hakarat ha'tov-appreciation and gratitude for all of life's blessings.
4. De-emphasis on competitiveness, material acquisition, or control.
5. Resilience and tenacity in response to setbacks.
6. Emulation of God's ways, focusing on the positive attributes of kindness and compassion.
7. Empathy with the other.

Certainly, if one made a serious effort to cultivate a spiritual relationship with God, there could be no room for any sort of interpersonal abuse. The fact that there can be abuse in a religious community means that while the community may be ritually religious, it does not reflect the spiritual ideals of these rituals.

I do not, however, want to spend too much time belaboring the obvious. Evil is evil and must be identified as such. Life inevitably has its frustrations, disappointments, and pressures; relationships have their stresses and indeed their breaking points. But even when a relationship fails, as regrettable as that may be, it is no cause for violence or abuse.

What I would like to do is move away from the “evil” and focus on the “good”—how Judaism envisions the healthy relationship, the degree of respect and consideration that spouses must have for each other, the Godliness and sanctity of human intimacy and love, and the paramount need to escape our egotism to learn to give selflessly to another.

By becoming more aware of what our responsibilities are and our expectations should be, we can learn to control the stormy and violent passions within. Perhaps by raising our gaze to the stars, we can lift ourselves out of the mud. And if the following words are not likely to be effective for the hard-core abuse, at least the rest of us can learn to be a bit more patient, tolerant, and forgiving in our daily lives.

Needless to say, relationship and sensitivity training should be part and parcel of the Jewish education of every boy and girl starting at the elementary school level and proceeding through adolescence. After all, driving a car requires a test of proficiency and a certain amount of training; tragically, marriage and parenthood do not, but most definitely should.

Very often, we enter marriage not being willing to commit ourselves to work at marriage. We are so preoccupied with the daily activities of our lives—our jobs, our external commitments—that we simply don't have the energy to work at a relationship.

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We just want it to happen. We want it to grow and deepen and be a source of nachas to us without putting the work into it.

The idea that you enter a marriage to have your needs met is, in fact, a very serious misconception.

If you look into the kesuvah, the marriage contract between husband and wife, it says, "I will work and support and honor my wife." It does not say "I will love my wife."

One Rosh Yeshiva explained that the idea of love is subsumed in the term "work." "Work" doesn't just mean "I will earn money." It means "I will work to love." This love is not the love of romantic passion or gratification of physical needs.

This love is the conscious effort to try to do good and try to take care of someone. To try to give of yourself to someone else. And that is not a love that comes instinctively. It takes time and commitment. That is why, in the Jewish tradition, we always teach that the true love of marriage is the love that you have after the marriage. The love of giving and sharing and working things out together that develops into a love which is, truly, selfless love.

Far too often, we approach marriage with the notion that we want somebody exactly like us. Someone who shares our likes and dislikes and who feels exactly the same way about things that we feel. In reality, the way a person grows spiritually and emotionally and the way a person develops as a human being is often through creative tension.

Sometimes it is the disagreement, the different way of viewing things, that brings partners in a marriage to a higher level. The creative interaction, the resulting type of tension, can allow you to achieve certain insights, goals, understandings, and developments in your personality, as a Jew, and as a servant of Hashem that would not have been achieved had you simply been allowed to develop in your own particular way.

Let's look at the parsha about the creation of the world and why marriage came into the world. Our chachamim teach us that originally Hashem created a man and then created a woman from the man. The Gemorah explains that originally there was a bisexual creature with two heads who was called Adam. Adam was a composite of man and woman. Hashem then said, "Lo tov hai asoh Adam I'vadoh—it is not good for this unit to be one. Let us separate them."

The man was not first and then the woman created from the man. Rather, they were both created at the same time and Hashem separated them. The question then becomes: "Why did Hashem separate them?"

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The posuk says, "Na'aseh lo ezer-Let us make him a helpmate-ezer k'negdoh." "Ezer" means a "help" and "k'negdoh" means "in opposition, opposite to him." The ezer k'negdoh, the way that a husband and wife help each other sometimes, is precisely the point: that interaction and tension allows both husband and wife to reach their own heights.

The only way we can learn to love God is by cultivating in ourselves the ability to love other human beings. When we love another human, truly love, we don't love them because of the way they look or because of the way they dress. We love them because of the way they are. Because there is something in them that resounds in us very deeply. What you're loving, basically, is the emergence of that person's divine spark.

If you love a person's kindness, compassion, or caring, you are loving the godliness within that person. Schlomo Hamelech teaches us a lesson:

You don't love God by going up to the mountain, becoming a hermit, locking yourself away from society, and saying "Oh, I love God." You come to love G-d by the nitty gritty of working on human relationships, learning to love other human beings, interacting in an intimate manner, and establishing a family.

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## Reconstructionist Sermon

*by Rabbi Bob Gluck*

*Author, composer and rabbi to Congregation Ahavath Sholom in Great Barrington, AM, Rabbi Bob Gluck, MSW has for many years been an advocate, consultant, and therapist working to stop domestic violence in the Jewish community.*

How well do we hold ourselves to account for our failings as a community? Do we effectively respond to cries of need from others more vulnerable than ourselves? Are we listening?

Responsibility and accountability are central themes of the High Holy Days. During these days, we are asked to reflect upon our lives and on our deeds, with the hope that we will acknowledge our failings and commit ourselves to rising above them. We are to consider whether we respond to the call of our own conscience, and whether we answer when we hear the divine voice within us. Do we heed the divine voice when it is expressed in the calls of our neighbors and loved ones who require that our actions be acts of responsibility?

This past week, on Rosh Hashanah, we read from the Torah reading known as "The Akedah-The Binding of Isaac." God calls Abraham's name. Without even knowing the reason for the call, Abraham immediately responds "Hineni-I am here." Later, when Abraham discovers that his task is not to harm his child, but to protect him by heeding another divine voice, again his response is "Hineni-I am here."

This afternoon, we read of Abraham's alter ego, the prophet Jonah. Jonah is called upon to save the city of Ninevah. He is to call upon them to do teshuvah, to consider their ways, and thus be spared destruction. But Jonah's response is not "Hineni-I am here." Rather, it is to flee to book passage on the next ship sailing for a different port of call. In this way, Jonah believes that he can avoid confronting the Ninevites.

Of course, the moral of Jonah is that there is ultimately no escaping responsibility. He gets no further than the seas before his irresponsibility is discovered. He eventually heads to Ninevah, but is angered when the people of that city indeed heed his call. Jonah's inability to understand what it really means to be accountable comes to the fore when he weeps beneath a wilting bush that once gave him shade. His inability to learn is pitiful. And it is brought home in the story by the contrast between Jonah's deep mourning for his momentary source of comfort and his lack of feeling for other people.

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It would be my wish that the day would come when we could read Jonah's myopic view of the world as a satiric reflection of how people once behaved. But this day has surely not arrived. Each of us, and we as a community, make daily choices about what we are willing to see, whose voices we are willing to hear, and which calls for help we are willing to respond.

When major communal issues confront us, we are often like Abraham. Has there ever been a time when North American Jews have failed to respond to calls for help when Israel has been in crisis? How numerous were those who responded to the need to assist the emigration and resettlement of former Soviet Jews! How easily have we discussed and acted on concerns about Jewish continuity!

Should it not be that the model of Abraham appear as easily and frequently before our eyes when the voices of neighbors and loved ones are crying out? How much the more so when it is our own children and our most beloved relatives?

Very often, people we love suffer in silence because they know that we are not listening. Millions of women around the world, people we each personally love, suffer at the hands of the men whom they love, in their very own homes. Right next door to us live women who are in constant fear, whose actions are controlled by men whom we respect and whom we may call "brother" or "neighbor" or a "communal leader" or "boss." It is now well established that upwards of one out of six Jewish women have suffered physical abuse by a spouse.

Women whom we care about report to their doctors that an arm broken during an assault was caused by a fall down the stairs. They do so because they know that friends and neighbors may not believe the truth. The reality is that, of every five emergency room visits by women, one is due to an injury caused by spousal assault.

Parents often blame abused women for the abuse. Parents of women not infrequently take the side of their abusive son-in-law because they choose not to believe their daughter. Lack of support for battered women to make safe choices in their lives is a major reason that these women remain in abusive relationships. It is simply too dangerous to leave. It may be shocking to know that three out of every four battered women who are murdered by their spouses die when or after leaving the home. There also is a lack of financial support to leave one's home, especially with children, and to establish a new life. This is especially true when, as is so often true, the family is financially dependent upon the husband.

While battered women in America remain in abusive relationships on the average of three to five years, could you imagine that battered Jewish women remain for eight to ten years! How could such a thing be? How could it be

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that a community guided by principles of love, honor, truth telling, and peace could tolerate such a violation of what we stand for? How could it be that a tradition that speaks of marriage as a “b’rit—a sacred covenant,” could find among its adherents a daily repudiation of this value?

Are we so unwilling to acknowledge that Jewish men are capable of controlling and physically assaulting their partners? Are we so unwilling to accept the notion that Jews can be victimized by other Jews? In fact, domestic violence is the major remaining threat to the physical safety of Jews in North America. Is it better to hide the truth than face the reality that things take place among us that we would consider a shanda?

There is so much to learn about domestic violence. Much of what we believe is misguided myth. Here are the facts: Abuse is a way by which people control others—what they do, where they go, whom they associate with, and ultimately what their hopes and dreams can be. It is a method of getting one’s way by exploiting vulnerabilities. Acts of physical violence need not occur frequently—all that is needed is the threat of violence: “Remember what happened the last time that you did other than what I say.” Often physical violence seems to have no precipitating “event.” It is simply an assault in the bedroom upon waking, maybe an attack during a day with the family on vacation. Abusive husbands not infrequently strike their spouses when pregnant or on their honeymoon. There is much more to learn. In our own community, there are organizations that teach about abuse and advocate on behalf of battered women. Let me tell you about some of our local resources.

Abuse in Jewish homes is not new. What is different today is the pervasive silence that surrounds it. The great pre-modern rabbis of our tradition spoke often and forcefully against abusive husbands, and in defense of battered wives. Numerous rabbinic rulings from the 9th century onward punish abusive husbands with an array of remedies.

Rabbinic courts were allowed to compel violent husbands to grant their wives a divorce, including a financial settlement. Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg (Even Ha-Ezer 297) allowed the court to administer corporal punishment against the perpetrator. Rabbi Simha ben Shmuel of Speyer allowed the wife to appeal to the gentile courts to enforce a rabbinic ruling against her husband, a most unusual action for a rabbi of the time to take.

It is Yom Kippur afternoon. Soon the sun will begin to set. It will be Ne’ilah, the closing service. Tradition speaks of the gates of teshuvah—the portals of repentance and change—closing as the sun sets. Indeed, every moment is an appropriate time for reflection and change. But this time, among the most sacred moments in Jewish life, beckons us to look especially closely and to commit to new ways.

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Let us make use of this time to consider what we can do to help stop abuse within our own community. Let us begin to learn more about domestic violence. Here are some concrete steps I urge upon our synagogue.

[These could include inviting speakers from local organizations, raising funds to support local shelters for battered women, doing the same for programs in Israel (The New Israel Fund supports several), collecting furniture and clothing for women in shelters, advocating for increased police and judicial training about domestic violence, considering policies that will better provide for battered women who may belong to the synagogue, advocacy for the continuation of federal support programs upon which many battered women who have left home depend, encouraging Jewish communal organizations to offer kosher meals for local shelters.]

Above all, we can commit ourselves to demonstrating that we wish to listen to the voices of Jewish battered women. How different things might look if we truly considered the possibility that women we know might be suffering abuse at home. Circumstances might change significantly were we to seriously consider that Jewish men we know might be assaulting or threatening their spouses in the privacy of their homes. Opening ourselves to such possibilities, as painful as this might be, can open our ears to hearing truths we otherwise avoid. This in itself is an important act of teshuvah. It is one upon which battered women's lives hinge.

We speak of the Jewish people as “am kadosh—a holy people.” This phrase needn't mean that we are a people lacking in any flaws or blemishes. Yes, we deeply deserve to dwell on our strengths at far greater length than we usually allow ourselves. Yet for all that is wonderful about our communities, we surely have our faults. This is part of what it means to be human. Maybe being “am kadosh” means being a people who are willing to face difficult truths, head on, and who are willing to learn to change.

The tragedy of Jonah is that he personally did not want to change. This is why he was unwilling to witness the people of Ninevah changing. For, if the Ninevites could change, his own excuses would fall away. And so, let us join together as a community eager to seek new paths, especially when it means justice for people whom we love. Let us echo the response of Abraham—“Hineni—I am here,” so that we may become a community more fully dedicated to stopping domestic violence where it hurts the most—in our own homes.

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## Reform Sermon

*By Rabbi Julie Spitzer*

Rabbi Julie Spitzer is the Director of the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, a region of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Rabbi Spitzer is author of "Spousal Abuse in Rabbinic and Contemporary Judaism," "a landmark historical survey of domestic violence in Jewish texts." She serves on the Bi-National Advisory Board of the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle, WA. Rabbi Spitzer was ordained from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. She holds two masters degrees, one in Jewish education, the other in Hebrew Letters. She received her BA from the University of Florida in Gainesville, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa.

I speak with you today, not as a survivor of abuse, not as a sociologist, not even as someone who has worked lately in a shelter program or on a telephone hot line (although I have done those things.) I speak to you as a rabbi. One who has heard countless voices telling of abuse and violence in the one place that we would all hope to be a safe place—at home. I speak to you as someone who has been working in the field of abuse prevention since 1982. I speak to you as someone who thought my family, like most other Jewish families, was immune to violence and abuse. In fact, it wasn't until after my rabbinic thesis on the subject was completed that my mother revealed a family secret to me. No, my parents have been happily married to one another for forty years. But, there was indeed abuse in my family. My uncle, now deceased, had used physical and verbal abuse against my aunt, and even against my cousins. All of the whispered conversations of my childhood now made sense to me. No wonder my cousin came to live with my grandparents. No wonder we only saw this part of the family from time to time and not regularly. No wonder my grandparents seemed so anxious about certain family events. Yes, even in my family—there it was.

As a rabbi, I rely on the voices of wisdom that teach timeless Jewish values. Ben Bag Bag is among my favorite Jewish sages. In Pirke Avot (5:25), he teaches that we should "turn the Torah over and over, for everything is contained therein. A familiar phrase can lose its sharpness of meaning when heard repeatedly. Yet, when we hear it for the hundredth time or the fiftieth time or even the tenth time, that same phrase may resonate anew.

*"Haray At M'kudeshet Li"*

For example, the opening words of the Jewish wedding vow, are recited by a groom to his bride. Embedded in that vow is the root word kadosh, holy, sacred, unique, set apart. As the groom and bride make their declarations to one another, they are naming the other as holy, as sacred, as unique. To

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make such a vow is to declare before God and those assembled that your beloved is created in the Divine image, and, as such, has a bit of ruach Elohim, a bit of the Divine spirit, as part of every cell. Therefore, to cause harm to one's beloved is not only to wrong another human being. It is tantamount to wronging God.

Another lesson from our tradition, this one from the Hafetz Hayyim, teaches that when we humiliate another person, it is tantamount to shedding that person's blood. When we think of violence and abuse in Jewish homes, our first thoughts are probably of physical abuse: broken arms and blackened eyes. However, we should also be aware of the invisible scars left by a constant verbal barrage. These wounds to the psyche wear down the self esteem of the recipient, day by day, week by week. It is very difficult, particularly for someone with fewer resources at their disposal, to escape this continual abuse. And yet, unless it is understood in the context of an overall pattern of abuse in the home, it is often overlooked or stigmatized by those in a position to help.

A third teaching, in the form of a story: As a participant in a workshop conducted by a nationally recognized expert in this field, I was asked to make a list of all of the commandments relative to the subject of violence and abuse in the home. I quickly listed "Thou shalt not murder," and "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and, cleverly, I even added "Thou shalt not take the name of the Eternal in vain." The group was then asked to share their lists, and the interfaith group came up with the same ones I had listed. (I added in a few more from sections of Leviticus, too.) But our facilitator then said to us, "You left out another of the top ten: 'Thou shalt not steal.'" We all thought for a moment, trying to make the connection. When you abuse another person, she explained, be it physical or emotional abuse, you take, you steal a bit of that person's soul. Each time that another human being is abused, a bit of that person is diminished. The abuser is stealing. It is one thing when two people in a relationship give of themselves to one another. That is mutual. It is safe. Abuse is taking without permission. It is stealing the soul of another.

There are women, men, and children in our families who struggle with God and with Judaism on a daily basis. Abused and abuser alike have moments of doubt, or are in need of comfort. The one who abuses is not a monster, to be discarded or dismissed. The abuser needs someone who can name what is being done as wrong, and can direct him or her to a place for help. In some cases, it is the legal system that does this. The legal system is not the only option. Self referral can be very useful, when coupled with the right program. But the synagogue, and the Jewish community at large, should not be a silent partner to the abuse. A measure of justice is warranted.

The abused, too, should find someone who will listen in the synagogue and within the community. A measure of compassion is needed here. Synagogue

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leaders ask, "Why do I not hear of those who are abused in my synagogue?" Our reply should be, "Do you speak out about abuse? Do people know that you are willing to listen? Do they know that this is really a safe place?" Imagine what it is like when your only real connection to Judaism is through the same person who is doing unspeakable things to you at home. We need not look to the six o'clock news for real life stories about abuse in Jewish homes. We only need to listen, and to be present for those who need us, and God, the most.

Lest you think that abuse in our homes is new, the result of the women's movement, or interfaith marriage, think again.

"Give ear, O God, to my prayer; do not ignore my plea; pay heed to me and answer me. I am tossed about, complaining and moaning at the clamor of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked; for they bring evil upon me and furiously harass me. My heart is convulsed within me; terrors of death assail me...I said, O that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and find rest; It is not an enemy who reviles me—I could bear that; it is not my foe who vaunts himself against me—I could hide from him; but it is you, my equal, my companion, my friend; his talk was smoother than butter, yet his mind was on war; his words were more soothing than oil, yet they were drawn swords."

These words were not penned by Hedda Nussbaum, both abuser and abused. They are not the words of Farrah Fawcett in "The Burning Bed," a made-for-tv movie about domestic violence. They are not the words of the woman you see from time to time at the JCC who came in with dark glasses and a very bruised-looking arm the other day. But they could have been. No, these are the words of the fifty-fifth psalm. Words written perhaps in the time of King David. The same words could have been written in the eighth century to Sadia Gaon, by an abused woman seeking relief. They could have been written to Meir of Rothenberg in the 13th century, as he pondered his response, his teshuvah, on the subject. They could have been written by my aunt or your sister.

For centuries, shalom bayit, household harmony, has been the hallmark of Jewish homes. It has been one of the few mitzvot accorded primarily to women. But it has also become a prison for many of those same women. "So he beats you once a month? That's only twelve times a year. How bad could that be? Your responsibility is to make shalom bayit. Go home to your husband. You can make it better." This is the advice given to one woman who was brave enough to seek help from her rabbi a few years ago.

Today things have begun to change. Many rabbis and lay leaders in the Jewish community know how to make referrals. They are working in concert with local prevention agencies and shelters. They know how to listen and to let

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families know that they are listening. They know that there is help, that abuse and violence can be prevented.

Jewish families do have unique needs. According to one leading Jewish expert, Jewish women stay longer in abusive relationships. For those who observe halacha more strictly, there can be a fear of going outside the community to seek help. There is a fear, common among minorities, that “they won’t understand us.” There are Jewish women who cannot be divorced from their husbands who refuse to grant them a get, a Jewish divorce. These women are forever “chained” to their husbands: they are agunot, and cannot remarry without a Jewish divorce. And the husband is using the Jewish divorce as a coercive tool.

Do we know if there are 100 Jewish families in which there is abuse or if there are 100,000? Sadly, our statistics are incomplete. However, we do know that the Talmud teaches that to save a single life is to save an entire universe. Abuse often is a matter of life and death. It is not the responsibility of one family alone. We are all responsible for one another.

There are a growing number of resources available to us on this subject. Rabbis, teachers, and community leaders have come to understand that there is a very important spiritual component in abuse prevention. And they are increasingly responding as persons of faith to persons of faith.

This work is not yet complete. For every family that finds help, there are many more who have yet to begin the search. Efforts to create a national, even an international, Jewish response to abuse and violence in our homes are underway. There are videos that address Jewish audiences. There are resource books and youth programs. There are even Internet communications among survivors. The answers are as varied and as creative as those who seek them. “Ours is not to complete the task, but neither are we free to desist from beginning it at all.”

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## Domestic Violence Policy Sample

### A. EARLY INTERVENTION AND EDUCATION PREVENTION STRATEGIES

1. It is the policy of (Congregation Name) to use early prevention strategies in order to avoid or minimize the occurrence and effects of domestic violence in the workplace. (Congregation Name) will provide available support and assistance to employees who are survivors of domestic violence. This support may include: confidential means for coming forward for help, resource and referral information, additional security at the workplace, work schedule adjustment or leave necessary to obtain medical, counseling, or legal assistance, and workplace relocation. Other appropriate assistance will be provided on individual need. In all responses to domestic violence, (Congregation Name) will respect the confidentiality and autonomy of the adult survivor to direct her or his own life, to the fullest extent permitted by law.
2. (Congregation name) will endeavor to maintain, publish and post in locations of high visibility, such as bulletin boards and break rooms, health/first aid offices, company phone directories and other reasonable locations, a list for survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence, including but not limited to national Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 799-SAFE or (800) 787-3224 (TTY). The Employee Assistance Program and/or Human Resources Department have a complete listing of local services that are available to victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.
3. (Congregation name) will ensure that all supervisors, managers and employees receive a copy of this policy, are aware of (Congregation Name)'s policies on these issues and, when possible participate in domestic violence training.
4. (Congregation name) will ensure that all supervisors, managers and employees are aware of possible warning signs of an abuse victim such as unexplained bruises, change in attitude or performance, lack of concentration, increased or unexplained absences, depression or heightened anxiety, receipt of harassing telephone calls, and disruptive personal visits to the workplace.
5. (Congregation name) will ensure that all supervisors, managers and employees are trained in safety planning and the handling of emergencies, such as the offender appearing at the workplace, and threatening the victim and co-workers.

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6. (Congregation name) will ensure that all managers are trained to speak with an employee who appears to be in danger, following this policy and making appropriate referrals.
  7. (Congregation name) will, to the extent possible, offer employees a reasonable amount of time off during work hours to obtain an order of protection, testify in the criminal trial, move or otherwise attend to emergency needs.
  8. (Congregation name) will ensure that any affiliated insurance company will not discriminate against victims by denying or limiting coverage entirely or in part, based on health issues arising from the abuse.

#### **B. LEAVE OPTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES WHO ARE EXPERIENCING THREATS OF VIOLENCE**

1. At times, an employee may need to be absent from work due to family violence, and the length of time should be determined by the individual situation. This time period shall be determined through collaboration with the employee, supervisor/manager and congregational leader.
2. Employees, supervisors, and managers are encouraged to first explore whether paid options can be arranged which will help the employee cope with a family violence situation without having to take a formal unpaid leave of absence. This leave will not be used against the employee. Depending upon the circumstances, this may include:
  - Time off with pay such as arranging flexible work hours so that the employee can handle legal matters, court appearances, housing, and children. Consider using other paid time off such as sick, annual, vacation or compensatory leave if possible.
  - Time off without pay such as an unpaid administrative leave, which could be taken in a block of time, or over several months as needed. If there are extenuating circumstances where additional time is needed, a formal leave of absence may be considered.

#### **C. PROCEDURES FOR EMPLOYEES WITH PERFORMANCE ISSUES RELATED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

1. While the employer retains the right to discipline employees for cause, (Congregation name) recognizes that victims of domestic violence may have performance or conduct problems such as chronic absenteeism or inability to concentrate as a result of domestic violence. When an employee subject to discipline confides that the job performance

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or conduct problem is caused by domestic violence, a referral for appropriate assistance should be offered to the employee.

2. The manager, in collaboration with the employee, any employee assistance counselor or human resource representative and congregational leader should allow a reasonable time for the employee to obtain assistance regarding the domestic violence. Managers should be mindful that the effects of domestic violence can be severe and may take extended periods of time to address fully.

#### **D. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES FOR EMPLOYEES WHO COMMIT ACTS OR THREATS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

1. (Congregation name) is committed to providing a workplace in which the perpetration of domestic violence and stalking are neither tolerated nor excused. Any physical assault or threat of assault or stalking behavior made by an employee while on (Congregation name) premises, during working hours, or at (Congregation name) sponsored social event is a serious violation of (Congregation name) policy. This policy applies not only to acts against other employees, but to acts against all other persons, including intimate partners. Employees found to have violated this policy will be subject to corrective action or disciplinary action up to and including discharge.
2. (Congregation name) will investigate all incidents of domestic violence and stalking where an employee is named as a defendant, whether a civil or criminal action or if the employer has reason to believe an employee has committed such crimes, but no formal action has taken place.
3. Upon completion of the investigation and if the employer reasonably believes such incidents did occur, the employee's employment can be terminated. In the alternative, if the domestic violence offense is a misdemeanor, (Congregation name) may:
  - (a) Require that the offender attend and successfully complete an offender intervention program, approved by the state of Arizona, and
  - (b) Explain to the offender that his/her continued employment is contingent upon not committing any new offenses, obeying all conditions of the order of protection (if one is obtained) and successfully completing the offender intervention program.

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## E. GUIDELINES REGARDING ASSISTANCE FOR SURVIVORS AND PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

1. The following information is provided to help employees of (Congregation name) who are survivors of domestic violence to obtain the services they desire and to enhance the safety of the workplace.
2. Victim safety is the primary goal of this policy, with offender accountability and treatment as important components. It is expected that all employees will abide by the laws of this and any jurisdiction in which they might find themselves, including the laws prohibiting domestic violence and stalking crimes, whether committed in the home, at work or any other location.
3. (Congregation name) seeks to create a supportive workplace in which employees feel comfortable discussing domestic violence concerns. If an employee discloses that they are a survivor of domestic violence, it is important to send the following messages and avoid victim blaming.
  - You are not alone.
  - You are not to blame.
  - There is help available.
  - You do not deserve to be treated this way.
4. If a supervisor believes that an employee is in an abusive relationship, but the employee has not disclosed this to their supervisor, the supervisor should address any job performance issues and refer the employee to the Employee Assistance Program and/or community resources.
5. Recognizing the absence of services and support for survivors of domestic violence and that a survivor of domestic violence may face threats of violence or death when they attempt to end a violent relationship, supervisors will make efforts to provide a nonjudgmental and supportive environment for the employee which is not dependent on the employee's decisions regarding the relationship.
6. Successful workplace intervention may consist of providing the employee with a nonjudgmental place to discuss the violence, information to begin accessing resources in the community, or assisting the employee to formulate a plan to increase the employee's safety—whether or not she/he is planning to leave the offender. Arrangements should be made for a victim advocate or trained domestic violence counselor to complete a more thorough safety plan, at the victim's convenience.

The above information was synthesized out of information from Tucker, Buel and Associates.

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**NOTES**